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THE NEW YORKER

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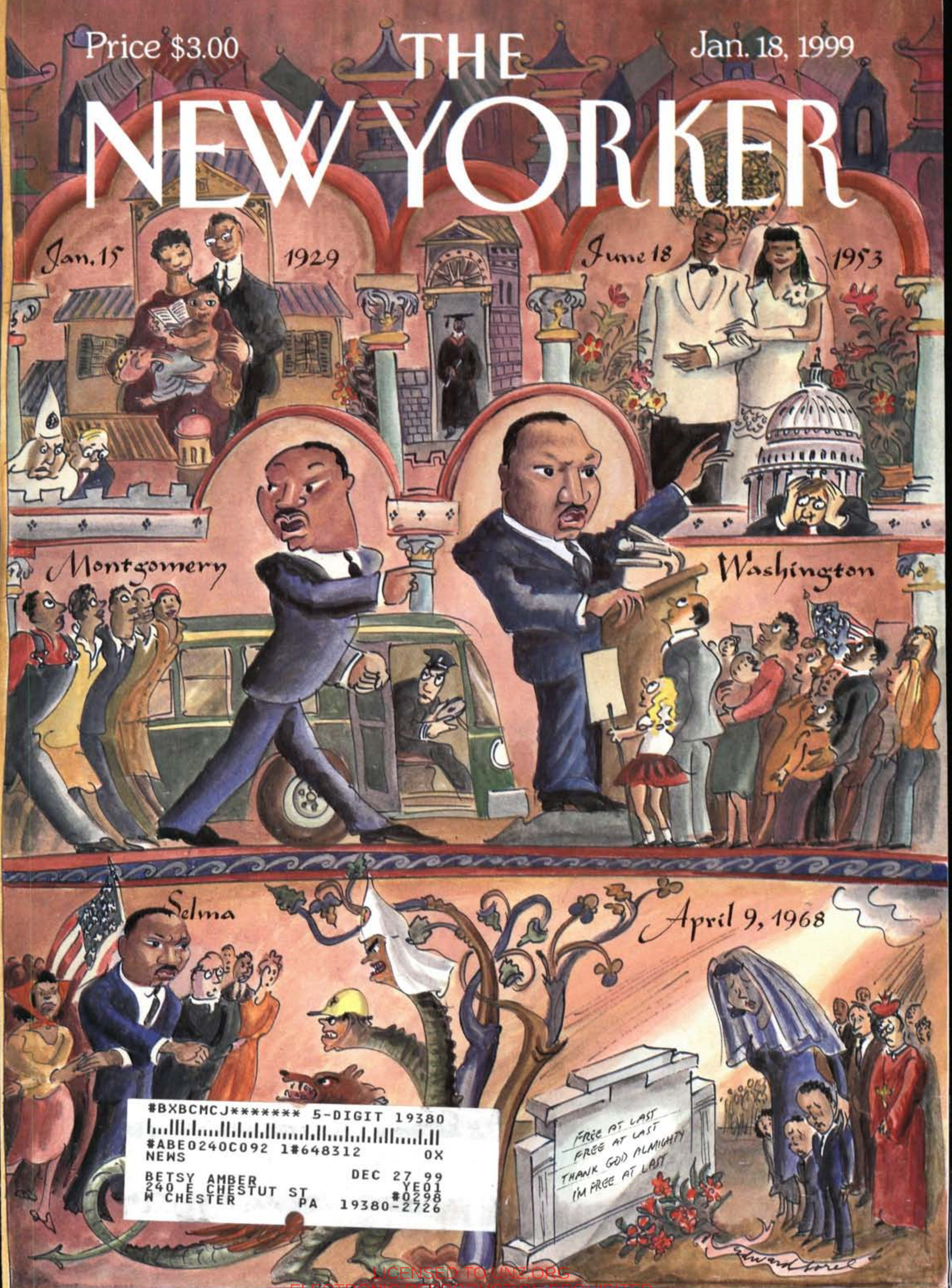
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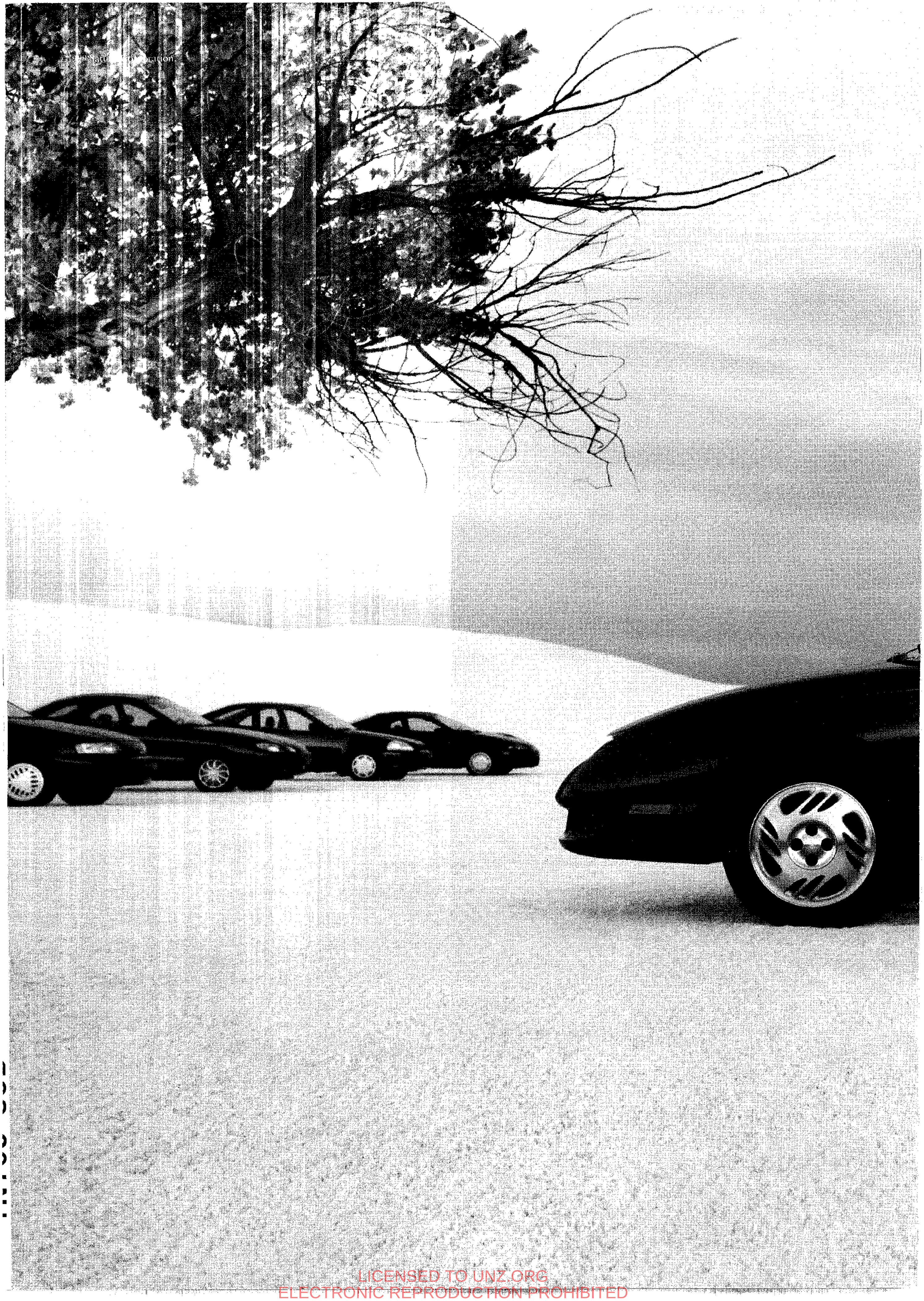

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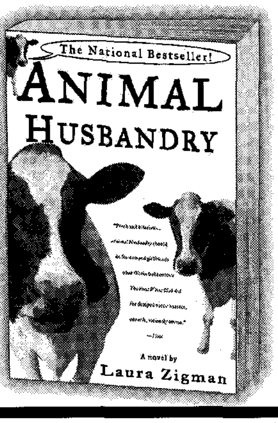

THE NEW YORKER

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THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 22 & Mar. 1, Apr. 26 & May 3, June 21 & 28, Aug. 23 & 30, Oct. 18 & 25, Dec. 27 & Jan. 3) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXIV, No. 42, January 18, 1999. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $42.00; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $90.00 (includes GST and HST where applicable). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationale Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $112.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, CO 80328-6447. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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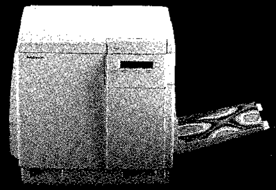

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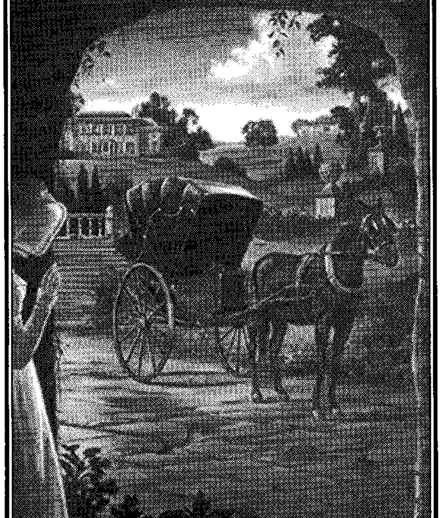

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CONTRIBUTORS

ELIZABETH KOLBERT ("The Charisma of No Charisma," p. 34) has joined *The New Yorker* as a staff writer. This week marks the début of her regular column on local politics.

SEYMOUR M. HERSH ("The Traitor," p. 26) has contributed to this magazine since 1971. His most recent book is "The Dark Side of Camelot."

DAPHNE MERKIN (Books, p. 79) writes regularly about books and has a column about cultural and personal life.

SEAMUS HEANEY (Poems, p. 30, p. 56) was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. His most recent collection of poems is "Opened Ground."

NATHAN ENGLANDER (Fiction, p. 64) has completed his first collection of stories, "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges," which will be published in April.

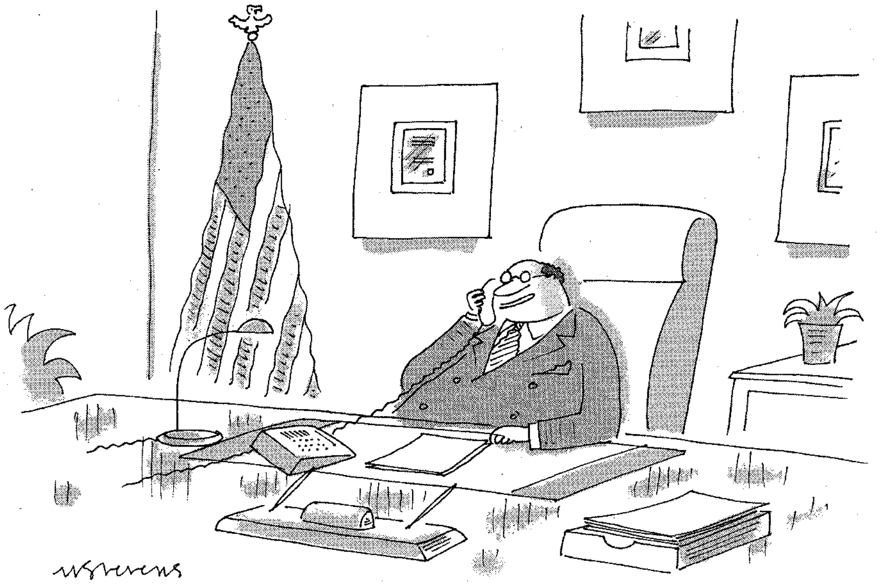
MICHAEL SPECTER ("Decoding Iceland," p. 40), a foreign correspondent for the magazine, is based in Rome and writes regularly on science.

CLIVE JAMES (A Critic at Large, p. 72) is the host and co-producer of a weekly television program in Britain. His most recent novel is "The Silver Castle."

JAY McINERNEY ("Naked on the Grass," p. 52) is the author of six novels, including "Model Behavior," which was published in September.

JOE KLEIN (Comment, p. 21) is *The New Yorker's* Washington correspondent and the author of "Primary Colors."

WILLIAM STEIG ("Dining Out," p. 47) has contributed drawings to the magazine since 1930. "The World of William Steig," by Lee Lorenz, was published last year. ♦



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THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. David Carey, publisher; David M. May, associate publisher; Brenda Saget, associate publisher; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, special-projects director; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; James Oates, director of marketing and planning. For advertising inquiries, please call Gretel Schneider or Richard Skeen, advertising directors, at (212) 536-5400. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1999 by The Condé Nast Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of The Condé Nast Publications, Inc. S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, president and C.E.O.; Charles H. Townsend, executive vice-president; Catherine Viscardi Johnston, executive vice-president; Eric C. Anderson, executive vice-president/chief financial officer.

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THE MAIL

PREHISTORIC TERRORISM

The anthropologist Christy Turner II's conclusion that the prehistoric Southwestern people known as the Anasazi were cannibals (described in Douglas Preston's "Cannibals of the Canyon," November 30th) is a sad instance of revisionist history. "Anasazi" is a pejorative Navaho term referring to the ancestors of all the Pueblo peoples, including the Hopis. Over the past ten years, I have lived and worked among the Hopis and have become close friends with many Hopis who have extensive knowledge of their tribe's esoteric teachings. My discussions with them and others indicate that their oral tradition does not mention cannibalism—and Hopi teachings and migration stories are not by any means whitewashed. They are, in fact, full of object lessons in violence and abusive behavior. And yet, Turner invokes the bogeyman of cannibalism, a practice brought from Mexico by Toltec invaders, to explain the Anasazi's abandonment of sites at Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde when there is ample evidence from tree-ring data and soil science that most of the thousands of Anasazi sites were abandoned because of severe drought and salinization. He provides not one shred of evidence for his conclusion that the Toltecs and their descendants were able to force their cannibalistic habits on the Anasazi, and though he has found evidence of cannibalism at thirty-eight sites (among thousands), that evidence is insufficient to support the far-reaching conclusion that the Anasazi themselves were cannibals. Turner invokes Occam's razor to support that conclusion, but the sensational nature of the subject and the conflicting evidence make it a gratuitous insult to the tens of thousands of Anasazi descendants who live today on the Hopi mesas, at Laguna, Acoma, and Zuni, and in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico.

STEVE BLODGETT
Kykotsmovi Village, Ariz.

Clinicians, including me, who have been working over the last decade or more with survivors of politically motivated torture may provide support for Christy Turner's thesis that cannibalism was used in the Anasazi community as a means of social control. Just as Anasazi cannibalism appears to need an explanation other than starvation, so modern torture is not practiced primarily to get information but to terrorize large masses of people at once. Hence also, as with the Anasazi, the torture of women and children as well as of male potential fighters. It may be that the only reason that most modern torturers don't also resort to cannibalism is that they now have large, efficient prison systems in which they can torture many people over long periods of time—and it is more effective terror to release some victims as live examples than to eat them all.

GERALD GRAY
Executive Director
Center for Accountability and Justice
Berkeley, Calif.

DRIVING US CRAZY

In lauding Manhattan's street-grid plan in his review of "Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898" (Books, November 30th), Paul Goldberger fails to comment on one invidious urban effect that was unforeseeable when the plan was adopted in 1811: the grid plan's "equalization" permits motor-vehicle traffic to universally intrude on and interfere with pedestrianism, making New York unlike other great cities in the world, where it is relatively easy when walking to find a quiet side street. In deeming the plan brilliant urban planning, Goldberger seems to be confusing New York's "determined rambunctiousness" with the stress caused by the grid's constant, omnipresent crush of traffic.

S. BASS
San Francisco, Calif.

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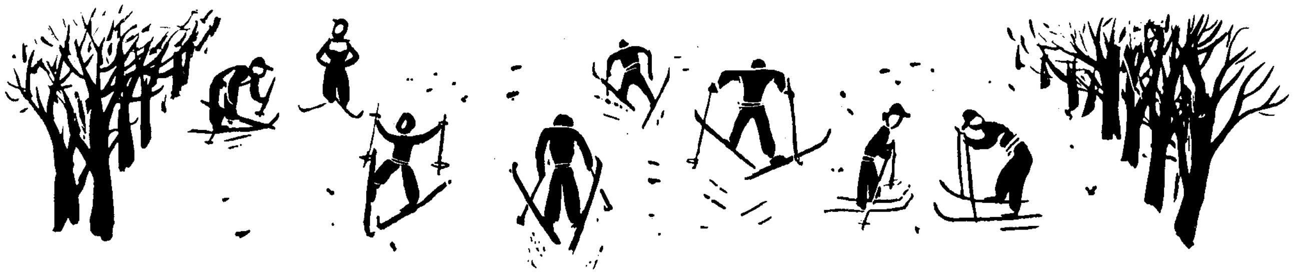

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Awake and Sing—Anne Jackson leads the cast in an Actors Studio staging of Clifford Odets' 1935 drama, about a lower-class Bronx family. Opens Jan. 13 at 8 and runs through Jan. 31. (Raw Space, 529 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Book of Wren—A dramatic fable by Bronwen Denton Davis, about a medieval abbot obsessed with the power to heal. Jeffrey Hayenga, Tracy Sallows, and Ben Shaeffer are in the cast. Previews Jan. 14-17. Opens Jan. 19 at 8 and runs through Jan. 31. (Miranda Theatre, 259 W. 30th St. 268-9829, ext. 1.)

Caesar and Cleopatra—Jean Cocteau Repertory's production of Shaw's 1899 play begins previews Jan. 15. It will run in repertory with the company's staging of Joe Orton's comedy "Loot." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Captains Courageous: The Musical—Manhattan Theatre Club presents Treat Williams and Brandon Espinoza in a tuneful version of Kipling's novel. With music by Frederick Freyer and book and lyrics by Patrick Cook. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Fosse—A tribute to the choreographer's work, created by Richard Maltby, Jr. (director), Ann Reinking (co-director/co-choreographer), and Chet Walker (choreography re-creator). Two previews on Jan. 13. Opens Jan. 14 at 6:30. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

High Life—Four morphine-blitzed crooks plot a bank heist, in a black comedy by first-time playwright Lee MacDougall. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

House/Lights—Gertrude Stein's libretto for the opera "Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights" and the 1964 cult film "Olga's House of Shame" are the inspirations for the Wooster Group's latest work. In previews. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

Iphigenia Cycle—Theatre for a New Audience presents Euripides' "Iphigenia at Aulis" and "Iphigenia in Tauris," under the direction of JoAnne Akalaitis. Previews begin Jan. 19. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

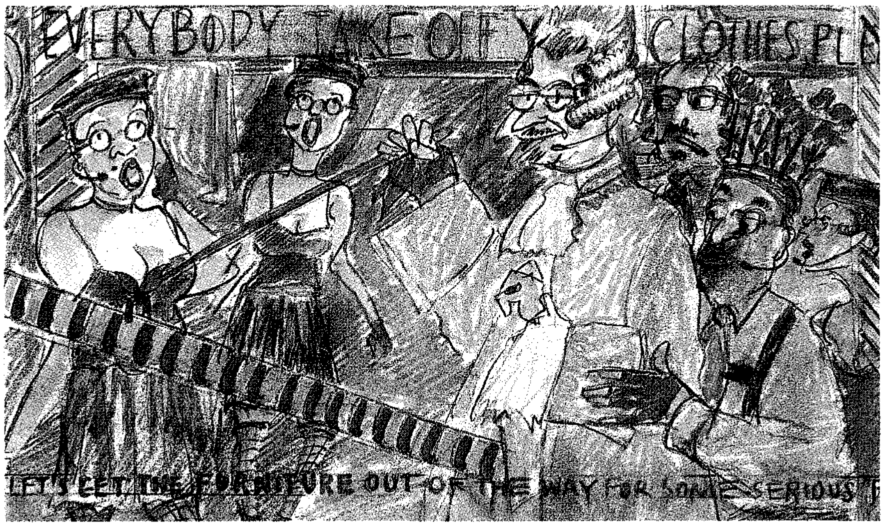
Little by Little—Liz Larsen, Christiane Noll, and Darrin Baker portray childhood friends who become involved in a love triangle as adults, in a new musical from the York Theatre Company. With music by Brad Ross, lyrics by Ellen Greenfield and Hal Hackady, and a story by Ms. Greenfield and Annette Jolles. In previews. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Whoa-Jack!—Büchner's "Woyzeck" is transplanted to the American South of the sixties, in a jazz-accompanied adaptation by Jeff Cohen. Previews Jan. 15-17. Opens Jan. 18 at 8 and runs through Feb. 7. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 604-4195.)

OPENED RECENTLY

All Under Heaven—Valerie Harper portrays Pearl Buck in a drama about the author's life, co-written by Ms. Harper and Dyke Garrison. (Century Theatre, 111 W. 15th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 17.)

The Blue Room—Nicole Kidman is beautiful, leggy, and damn good at her job, and she and her excellent co-star, Iain Glen, have real chemistry, but it takes all of their charisma to give the cardboard characters and the charmless script an iota of life. David Hare followed Arthur Schnitzler's game plan in this adaptation of his Viennese sexual merry-go-round, "La Ronde," so the shallowness of the characters is not entirely Hare's fault; his contribution is the brittle dialogue, which makes the series of sad seductions all the more insufferable. There's nothing erotic here, and even the news of Ms. Kidman's nudity has been greatly exaggerated. Directed by Sam Mendes. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/28/98 & 1/4/99.) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)


EVERYBODY TAKE OFF Y
CLOTHES PL
LET'S GET THE FURNITURE OUT OF THE WAY FOR SOME SERIOUS F

Richard Foreman's "Paradise Hotel," at the Ontological Theatre.

Brandon Teena—The Present Company presents Leigh Silverman's drama, inspired by the true story of a sensational murder that took place in Falls City, Nebraska, in 1993. (Present Company Theatorium, 198 Stanton St., at Ridge St. Closes Jan. 16.)

The Captain's Tiger—A theatrical memoir, set on a steamer bound for Asian ports, by the South African playwright Athol Fugard, who leads the cast. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Collected Stories—Despite a splendid performance by Uta Hagen, as an aging writer who tells her protégée the one story about her own life which she hasn't written, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

The Country Wife—The Pearl Theatre Company's production of Wycherley's Restoration comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

A Couple of Blaguards—Shay Duffin and Mickey Kelly perform Frank and Malachy McCourt's two-man autobiographical show. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Cunning Stunts—A new installment of monologues and music from the Erotica Project (Lillian Ann Slugocki, Erin Cressida Wilson, and John Gould Rubin). Jan. 14-16 at 8:30. (Joe's Pub, at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Electra—When the superb Zoë Wanamaker first appears onstage in the title role of David Leveaux's powerful production of Sophocles' tragedy (in a new version by Frank McGuinness), she is wedged in an alcove halfway up the exterior wall of her dead father's palace, wearing the ancient mask of tragedy; she descends to earth and takes off the mask to show us the modern face of torment. It is the first of several huge, shrewdly staged moments in a production that allows the play's bewildering brutality to come through as clearly as yesterday's headlines. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

An Evening with Quentin Crisp—The author, actor, and wit celebrates his ninetieth year, with a return engagement of his one-man show. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 330-7200. Closes Jan. 31.)

Far East—An American military officer (Michael Hayden) is caught in a triangle involving his commander's wife, in a drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Footloose—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film, co-written by Dean Pitchford (who also wrote the screenplay) and Walter Bobbie. With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Mr. Pitchford. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Killer Joe—In Tracy Letts's graphic dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. Though the experience sometimes feels like being trapped in Sam Shepard's claustrophobic Nowheresville while being smacked around by Quentin Tarantino, the terrific production is so vividly unself-conscious that you hardly feel

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

assaulted at all—in fact, you enjoy it. Paul Dillon and Jan Leslie Harding take over for Scott Glenn and Amanda Plummer beginning Jan. 13. Wilson Milam is the director. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

Little Me—Martin Short carries this musical-comedy relic on his cute little shoulders with ease. But the show—a spoof of celebrity rags-to-riches stories, which originally starred Sid Caesar, in 1962, in multiple roles—*is* a relic, so audience members not madly in love with Short (who are these people?) may find themselves scratching their heads, wondering how the innocent/ribald silliness ever inspired more than minor laughs. The rest of the cast is pretty much generic, with the exception of the wonderful Faith Prince, and unfortunately she's miscast. Written by Neil Simon (book), Cy Coleman (music), and Carolyn Leigh (lyrics). Direction and choreography are by Rob Marshall. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300. Closes Feb. 7.)

Lyz!—A New Yorker leads her women's political-action group in a sex strike to clean up city violence, in this musical update of Aristophanes' "Lysistrata." Book and lyrics by Joe Lauinger; music by Jim Cowdery. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 353-7832.)

The Mystery of Irma Vep—It's not difficult to imagine what made this farce a hit back in 1984: the play's author and original star, the immensely gifted Charles Ludlam, who died in 1987 of complications due to AIDS. As staged and performed by that production's co-star, Everett Quinton, this version ends up a bore, despite its fairly outré conceit—"Rebecca" meets Agatha Christie meets pure camp. Drag has been out of the closet for a long time now; this is an artifact of a more innocent time. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Old Settler—Leslie Uggams and Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr., portray a pair of mismatched lovers in 1943 Harlem. The play, written by John Henry Redwood, has fine characterizations and delightful jokes, but the structure is predictably melodramatic. Nevertheless, the whole cast (which includes Lynda Gravátt and Rosalyn Coleman), under the strong direction of Harold Scott, overcomes it all. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

On the Town—This revival of the 1944 musical, much like the city it celebrates in its famous opening number, is a mixture of undeniably irritating qualities and tremendous satisfactions, of mystifying chaos and disciplined vitality. The director, George C. Wolfe, jettisoned Jerome Robbins's original choreography in favor of new work that doesn't add anything; it's as if he tore down the Empire State Building and replaced it with . . . nothing. Still, this production is handsome and winning, and it features two performances that make you glad to be alive—one from Lea DeLaria, who plays a brassy bulldozer of a taxi-driver with Mermanesque confidence, skill, and charm, and one from Mary Testa, whose hilariously dignified portrayal of a dipsomaniac singing teacher is in the tradition of the great matronly comic character actresses of the thirties and forties. The cast in general is uneven, but the spirit of the show is very much alive in Wolfe's hands, and its pulse, fifty-four years later, still beats strong. (12/7 & 12/14/98) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Over the River and Through the Woods—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6202.)

Parade—This musical, co-conceived and directed by Hal Prince, with a book by Alfred Uhry and lyrics and music by Jason Robert Brown, revisits the case of Leo Frank, a college-educated Northern Jew who in 1913 was accused of murdering a teen-age girl in the Atlanta pencil factory that he managed, only to be taken from jail in 1915 by anti-Semitic vigilantes and lynched. It is generally believed that Frank was railroaded, and for the entire first act this show feels like a train hauling a heavy cargo of exposition uphill to a preset destination. The second act, in which Lucille Frank fights to save her husband's life, picks up some steam, but the ride is never quite exhilarating, despite its heady moments. The hard work that went into "Parade" is transparent, but in the theatre it's originality, not earnestness, that wins the day. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Paradise Hotel—A new mind bender from the director and writer Richard Foreman, about a group of travellers searching for sexual nirvana. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Phèdre and **Britannicus**—Diana Rigg and Toby Stephens star in the Almeida Theatre Company's stagings of Racine's tragedies, presented in repertory. Jonathan Kent is the director. "Phèdre": Jan. 13-14 at 7:30 and Jan. 17 at 3. . . . ¶ "Britannicus": Jan. 15 at 7:30 and Jan. 16 at 2. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

The Shaughraun—The nineteenth-century playwright Dion Boucicault's melodrama, staged by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 24.)

Side Man—Warren Leight's astute, elegiac play is a young man's bittersweet homage to his crazy, warring parents and to the mysteries of the jazz life that divided them. The father (played by Frank Wood with superb passive-aggressive vacancy), a big-band trumpet player, speaks articulately in his art but is a kind of zombie at home, which bewilders his son (a charming, laid-back Christian Slater) and drives his wife (Edie Falco) to drink. The son serves as a biographer of sorts, whose combined detachment from and involvement in the family is mirrored by the director Michael Mayer's expert staging, as he moves in and out of remembered scenes, alternately commenting on and participating in their chaos. (11/23/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

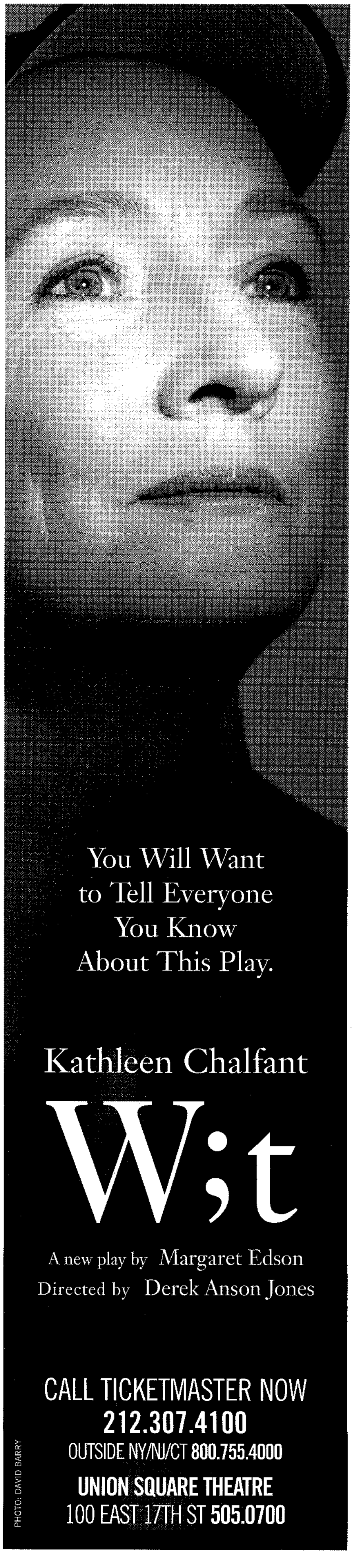
Some Voices—The British playwright Joe Penhall's comedy-drama about a restaurant owner who takes in his schizophrenic brother, presented by the New Group. Frank Pugliese is the director. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

Stop Kiss—Diana Son's modern tragicomedy, about two heretofore heterosexual young women (Jessica Hecht and Sandra Oh) falling in love in New York, is a small wonder. The fine production shifts back and forth seamlessly between scenes that lead up to the friends' first kiss and scenes that follow it, in the aftermath of a brutal, bias-inspired assault. It's a sweet dream and a nightmare at once, a juxtaposition that makes both sides of life seem more resonant. Ms. Hecht stands out in the first-rate cast. Jo Bonney directed. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 31.)

Swan Lake—The British choreographer Matthew Bourne's thrilling, iconoclastic version of the Tchaikovsky ballet takes the story of the troubled Prince who falls in love with a swan out of the realm of the folkloric and into the realm of Freudian nightmare, where obsession substitutes for enchantment. The simple but profound exchange of male for female swans sweeps away in one stroke the hidebound froufrou of the traditional version and releases enormous energy into the music. (10/19/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 23.)

Symphonie Fantastique—Basil Twist's abstract underwater puppets, set to the music of Berlioz. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

This Is Our Youth—Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak, set on the Upper West Side in 1982. His characters are meant to be the by-products of a morally bankrupt culture: they have money, they have a certain raggedy charm, and they can muster a kind of vocabulary. What they don't have in life is a reason to be; what they don't have onstage is a way of compelling our attention. Lonergan, whose script shows real theatrical promise, is good on surface behavior but not on sub-



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text. Everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. Mark Brokaw is the director. (11/23/98) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392.)

Wit—Margaret Edson's black comedy about an English professor (Kathleen Chalfant) dying of ovarian cancer, who finds solace in the sonnets of John Donne. An MCC Theatre production, directed by Derek Anson Jones. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

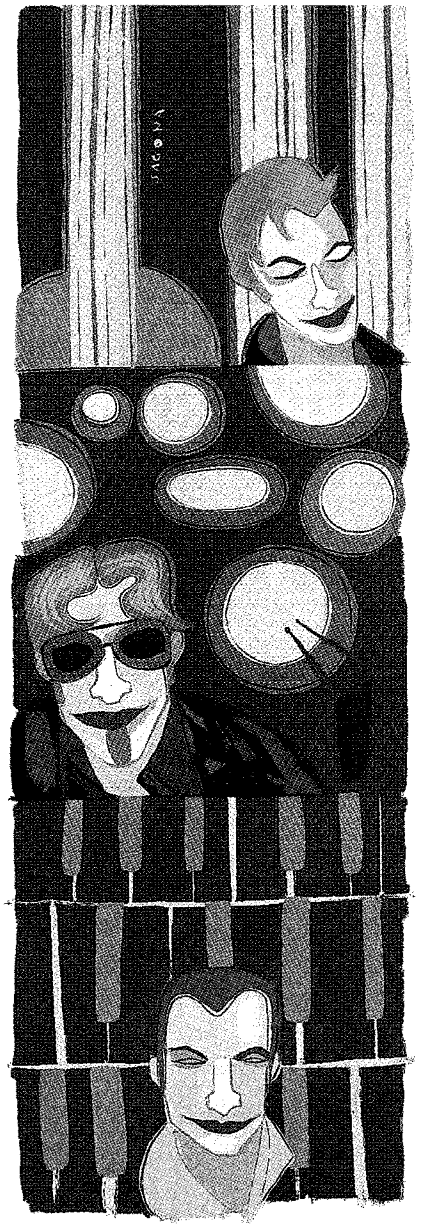
LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Jan. 13 at 8: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Liebeslieder Walzer," and "Bournonville Divertissements." . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 8: "Les Gentilhommes," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: "Bournonville Divertissements," "Variations on a Nursery Song," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 2: "Les Gentilhommes," "Valse-Fantaisie," "Episodes," and "Cortège Hongrois." . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 8: "Variations on a Nursery Song," "Liebeslieder Walzer," and "Cortège Hongrois." . . . ¶ Jan. 17 at 3: "Bournonville Divertissements," "The Four Temperaments," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 8: "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 28.)

"Altogether Different"—A fortnight of performances by five contemporary-dance companies, with programs that, in every case, include a première and at least one seasoned work. Jan. 13 and Jan. 15 at 8 and Jan. 16 at 2: **H. T. CHEN AND DANCERS**, in "Moon," "Esprit," and excerpts from "Warriors of Light." . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 8 and Jan. 17 at 7:30: **LISA GIOBBI MOVEMENT THEATRE**, in nine aerial and acrobatic works. . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 8 and Jan. 17 at 2: **SALLY SILVERS & DANCERS**, in "Teddy Growl," "Capture," and "Hush-Hush." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)



Medeski Martin & Wood, at the Bowery Ballroom.

"Hit & Run Festival"—Dance Theatre Workshop counters the Joyce with two weeks of experimental dance-music-and-performance hybrids. Jan. 13 at 8: **JENNY BASS** ("Interview with the Muses") and **OTRABANDA CO.** ("The Rushes of Tulsa"). . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 8: **RHETTA ALEONG** ("Process: The Working Progress"), **JEANNIE HUTCHINS** ("A Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling"), and **LISA KRON** ("The Contents of Mildred's Purse"). . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: **JIM NEU** ("Undercurrent Incorporated: Part One") and **PEGGY SHAW & LOIS WEAVER** ("Salad of the Bad Café"). . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 8: **JOSEPHINA BAEZ** ("Dominicanish") and **CARMELITA TROPICANA** ("Eat"). (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

"Volcano Love"—The seven-member company presents circus acts re-envisioned by the choreographer Sarah East Johnson: hoop diving, hand balances, professional wrestling, swing dance, and trapeze solos and duets, all set to a score by Babe the Blue Ox. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 13-16 at 8.)

"4 Nights, 7 Dances"—The eleven dancers of the Open 24 Hours Dance Company present a retrospective of their first six years, with repertory work and three premières, all choreographed by Pam Tanowitz. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. Jan. 14-15 at 9 and Jan. 16-17 at 8.)

"LightCycles"—A composer, a choreographer, and a video artist collaborate on a full-length work that blends hypnotic and trance-inducing effects of their respective mediums. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 924-0077. Jan. 14-17 at 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Billy Taylor Trio—Taylor's piano playing mirrors his public persona: sturdy, erudite, resolutely mainstream. His well-oiled trio will be joined by Etta Jones, the full-throated vocalist who can tackle standards and the blues with the assuredness of five decades of experience. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949. Jan. 14 at 7.)

Clark Terry and Carol Sloane—The expert, exuberant trumpeter and singer Terry and the refined vocalist Sloane cut a lovely recording together in 1997 honoring the marvellous collaborative recordings of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. There'll be no shortage of Terry's sly humor or Sloane's graceful interpretative skill when these two perform their tribute live. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Jan. 14 at 8.)

Sweet Honey in the Rock—The a-cappella quintet, in a concert for children. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. 307-7171. Jan. 17 at 2.)

Cry Cry Cry—Three of today's finest neo-folk singer-songwriters—Dar Williams, Lucy Kaplansky, and Richard Shindell—recently put down their pens to record a bunch of cover tunes, ranging from R.E.M.'s "Fall on Me" to Robert Earl Keen's "Shades of Gray." The album, also titled "Cry Cry Cry," is a collection of lovely harmonizing and pure emotion. Live, this gang will surely have you reaching for your handkerchief. With the Canadian singer-songwriter Ron Sexsmith. (Town Hall, 123 W 43rd St. 840-2824. Jan. 17 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 15-16: Hot Tuna legend **JORMA KAUKONEN** in an evening of blues-drenched guitar.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Funk, as George Clinton once put it, may be its own reward, but the critical kudos and loyal fan base that **MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD** (Jan. 13-17) have garnered over the past decade must taste just as sweet. Sure, Hammond-organ avatar Jimmy Smith could outswing this keyboard, bass, and drum team with one arm, but retro-authenticity has never been their game anyway. M. M. & W. slice and dice their way through myriad jazz and R. & B. influences with a gleeful disregard for propriety and a healthy dose of po-mo invention. When they put their minds to it, these white boys can make the funk fly.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Jan. 15: The mellow high-plains sound of the **COWBOY JUNKIES.** Jan. 18-19: **FEAR FACTORY.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—David Letterman's former guitarist **HIRAM BULLOCK** and current bassist **WILL LEE** get down to business on Jan. 14-15.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 13: The great, tragically unsung party band **PAUL CEBAR AND THE MILWAUKEEANS** provides an unusually fun evening of ska and jello-jiggling. Jan. 14: Has ever

MARINA SAGONA

a band rocked so delicately—and yet so menacingly—as New York's **CHAMPALE**? This shifting assemblage (a guitar trio fleshed out with the occasional horn, string, bell, or whistle) produces a melancholic sound that indicates an understanding of the notion that sometimes a whisper carries farther than a wail. Their live shows are sonic excursions into the grimy beauty of the city.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—In the seventies, while many of his R. & B. peers were blissfully succumbing to disco fever, singer-pianist (and poet-novelist) **GIL SCOTT-HERON** (Jan. 17) was fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap. He's been on tour ever since. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Jan. 15: Often hailed as the world's greatest bar band, **NRBQ** can live up to the hype. There just isn't another outfit with such a mastery of virtually every American popular-music idiom, from rockabilly and blues to jazz and swing. Jan. 16: **CHUCK BROWN AND THE SOUL SEARCHERS.** Jan. 17: Old-school, anti-violence rapper **KRS-1,** best known for his work in Boogie Down Productions (with the late Scott LaRock), and as an advocate of "Edutainment" (from the title of his excellent solo album).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Jan. 15-16: The **MARCUS PRINTUP** quartet. Another bright young trumpeter who's done his homework, Printup forages about in historical idioms to slowly fashion a self-assured style. He's no Wynton, but what's life without a dream? Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March 13, **EARTHA KITT.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance through Jan. 16.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 17: The **RON CARTER** quintet. The addition of tenor saxophonist **HOUSTON PERSON** could transform the entire personality of bassist Carter's sometimes anemic quintet. Person is a big-toned stylist who's unafraid of naked blues; if Carter tries to counter him with his pipsqueak piccolo bass, the evening could take on David-and-Goliath-like drama. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—**JAVON JACKSON** (in through Jan. 16) is no fool. With so many bright young tenor saxophonists around, he has ditched the conventional horn-and-rhythm setup on his most recent recordings and gone outré. Collaborating with Craig Street, the jazz producer of the minute, he experiments with organ, vocalists, and both acoustic and rock-ish guitars, tackling material by composers from Muddy Waters and Serge Gainsbourg to Tony Williams and Carlos Santana. Onstage, Jackson may not be able to replicate all the sonic high jinks of his disks, but his quartet is certain to keep things lively.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 13: **JUDI SILVANO.** If you've followed the career of the brilliant saxophonist Joe Lovano (see the Village Vanguard), you also know who Silvano is. This eager soprano pops up regularly on her husband's recordings, adding unexpected tonal flavor. Thankfully, Silvano's no preening traditionalist; if she errs, it's on the side of earnest experimentation. Jan. 15-16: Time hasn't dulled **JAMES (BLOOD) ULMER'S** edge—pulling shards of melody and twisted chords from his guitar while half barking/half drawling spacey blues, he sounds as nasty as ever. Jan. 18: Boston composer and arranger **KEN SCHAPHORST** has his new-jazz big band stocked with such downtown music regulars as pianist Uri Caine, bassist Drew Gress, organist John Medeski, saxophonists Seamus Blake and Andy Laster, and trombonist Josh Roseman—the kind of instrumental heft an out-of-town maestro dreams about.

LENOX LOUNGE, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—Jan. 15-16: The **JAMES SPAULDING** quartet. Spaulding, a ubiquitous presence on alto saxophone and flute during the sixties, may have smoothed out a few of the edges that made his playing so, well, edgy back then, but his taste for heated improvisation remains.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Jan. 17: **DON BYRON,** the eclectic clarinettist, goes Latin with his ensemble Music for Six Musicians. The virtuoso reedman, who flits from klezmer to free jazz to classical and beyond with ease, has also been working with Latin players since he was a teen-ager—expertise and imagination are givens. Dining.

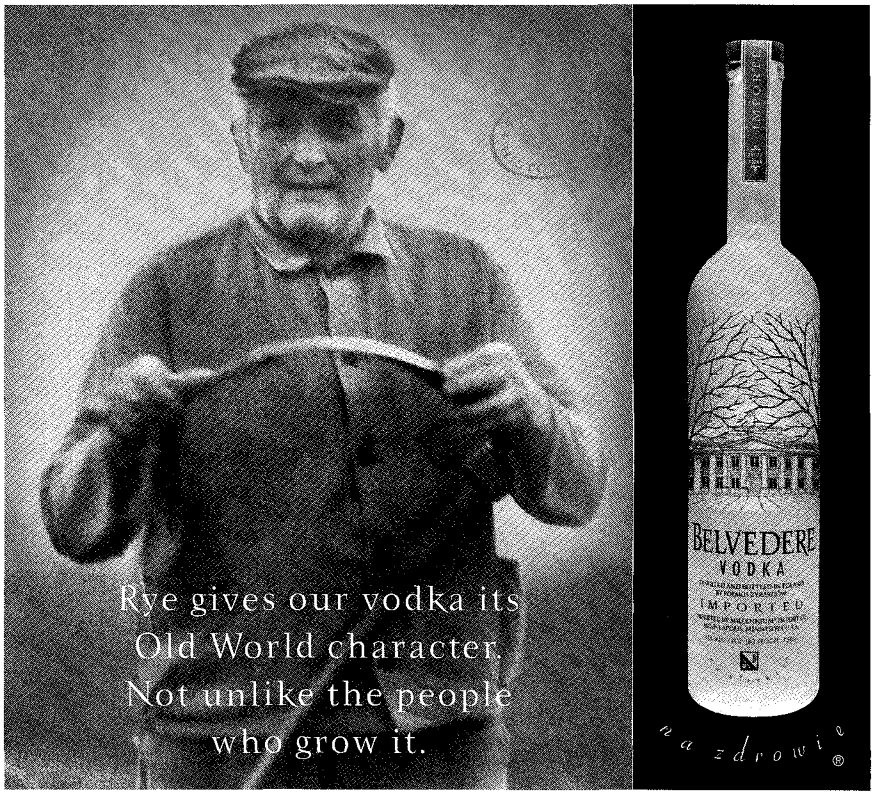
VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The superb saxophonist **JOE LOVANO** (through Jan. 17) will have to do without the incomparable rhythm team of drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Dave Holland from his latest recording, "Trio Fascination," but at least he's found two terrific runners-up: bassist **CAMERON BROWN** and drummer **IDRIS MUHAMMAD.** The interaction among these three promises to be fast and furious and, when Lovano digs deep into a ballad, profound. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Jan. 13-16: The **KYLE EASTWOOD** quintet. Bassist Eastwood is a chip off the old block: like his dad, Clint, he loves jazz. Eastwood has his funky side, but his hand-picked band of New York stalwarts, including saxophonist Eric Alexander and drummer Yoron Israel, speaks of hardy mainstream swing. The accomplished saxophonist Craig Handy takes over for Alexander on Jan. 15-16. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper 1969-1993," a major exhibition presenting fifty-four drawings, watercolors, gouaches, and woodcuts acquired by the museum in 1995. Through March 21 (reviewed in this issue). . . . ¶ "Dosso Dossi, Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara." Opens Jan. 14. . . . ¶ "Cubism and Fashion" showcases some fabulous frocks, ranging from the elegant productions of French couture in the first decades of the century, by such designers as Jacques Doucet and Gabrielle Chanel, to shockers by Versace and Yves Saint Laurent. However, by claiming to link fashion with artistic revolution the curators stretch the point; the small reproductions of cubist paintings placed next to some of the exhibits have little in common with the dresses, other than an echo of color or pattern. Through March 14. . . . ¶ "Donato Creti: Melancholy and Perfection" showcases an early-eighteenth-century painter (1671-1749), the last in a line of Bolognese classicists. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "Charles Burchfield from the Collection," a survey of the museum's holdings of this great, eccentric American painter (1893-1967). Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Félix Vallotton: Woodcuts and Three Paintings." Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Mary Cassatt: Drawings and Prints in the Met," a selection of more than fifty works on paper from the museum's collections. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Jade of Ancient Costa Rica" presents more than a hundred pendants, mace heads, ear ornaments, and beads, exquisitely carved with designs of birds, bats, and angry gods and polished to a high gloss. One of the most puzzling objects is an Olmec pendant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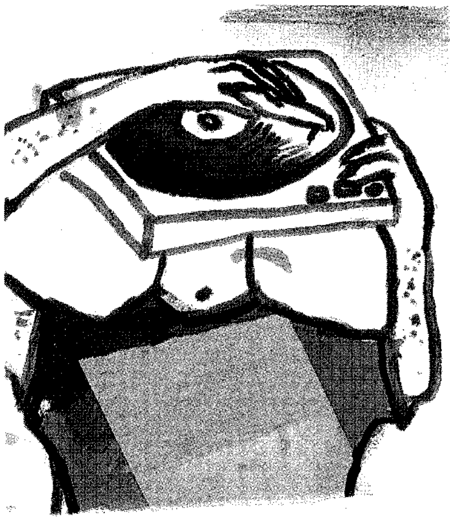
RADIO WEST 43RD STREET

Ten favorites from our 1998 album-oriented playlist.

"Car Wheels on a Gravel Road," Lucinda Williams (Mercury)—Her own manager has called her part Hope diamond, part bowl of cornflakes, but Lucinda Williams might be better described as the spiritual daughter of Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf. A forty-five-year-old, unfashionably unglamorous songwriter from Baton Rouge, Williams has made an improbably fine record that showcases her plangent, nicotine-gilded lungs and her gift for limning pain. "Car Wheels" is one of those career-defining albums in which every song is a miniature masterpiece.

"Big Calm," Morcheeba (Sire)—If the title weren't already taken, we'd respectfully suggest that this record be rechristened "Big Sleep." It's hard to find dance music so effortlessly narcoleptic, so calming to the brink of coma. Easy listening is usually an affront to the ears, but this multiracial British collective—trip-hop compatriots of Tricky and Portishead—makes listening easy in the manner of a funky twilight party at, say, a Tuscan villa. Blame the dreamy, mentholated voice of singer Skye Edwards, who graciously shares the spotlight with wa-wa guitars and symphonic strings.



"Hello Nasty," Beastie Boys (Grand Royal/Columbia)—They've been called obnoxious and bratty and macho clowns, but after more than seventeen years in the business Mike D, MCA, and Adrock have outwitted their critics and perfected a sonic landscape as rich and relentless as life in their home town, New York City. The album starts with "50 cups of coffee and you know it's on I move the crowd to the break of break of dawn," and doesn't stop until Latin grooves, space-age jams, and raps that "keep all five boroughs in stitches" have joined the mix. Like a teeming city block, this album offers a new discovery with each revisit.

"Mermaid Avenue," Billy Bragg & Wilco (Elektra)—When Woody Guthrie died, in 1967, he left behind the lyrics for hundreds of songs that had never been recorded. His manuscripts, which didn't include any musical notation (he carried the tunes in his head), ended up with his daughter Nora; three years ago she sought out the left-leaning English rocker Billy Bragg and asked him to put some of the lyrics to music. Bragg enlisted the alternative-country band Wilco, and the fifteen-track album they produced is a poignant and often rollicking collection filled with a lighthearted Guthrie few in this land could have imagined existed.

"The Little Red Songbook," Momus (Le Grand Magistery)—Though this record was recalled after the transsexual composer Wendy Carlos (formerly Walter Carlos of "Switched on Bach" fame) sued to have one of the songs removed, copies are still on the shelves. Typical of Momus (né Nick Currie), a Scotsman who looks for beauty in our baser instincts, the song in question imagined Carlos, his hero, travelling back in time to have sex with her pre-op self. Momus songs are frenetic collisions of literary references, but you can't help paying attention because they're full of a highbrow prurience. The surprise is that he melds his influences (everything from Beethoven to Serge Gainsbourg) into something so smooth, smart, and listenable.

"Noon Chill," Arto Lindsay (Bar None)—On the most languidly dark and prettily desolate album of the year, Lindsay, a downtown noise-jazz pioneer, has perfected his hybrid Brazilian sound. With the help of pianist Ryuichi Sakamoto and Brazilian percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, his usual harsh guitar dissonance has been calmed into a soothing bossa nova, and he sings sweet, abstract songs in Portuguese and English. An essay on longing, the album makes for perfect listening through every romantic phase, from butterflies-in-the-stomach crushes to post-breakup despair.

"The Best of Paolo Conte" (Nonesuch)—Like Marcello Mastroianni, Conte is a master of smoky, mature-man *sprezzatura*. He rumbles sexily or plays the kazoo; he throws in English nonsense stolen from a Louis Armstrong song; in his hands, a love song somehow ends up being about lemon ice cream. The singer rarely stirs from his small Piedmontese estate, but his lively tunes, with their offhand allusions (to *milonga*, Jelly Roll Morton, French cabaret), are always suave and cosmopolitan, and utterly romantic in their autumnal foolishness: it would be hard to find a more debonair selection to go with the night's first cocktails.

"The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" (Ruffhouse/Columbia)—This year's consensus record, at the top or near the top of most ten-best lists, and deservedly so. Hill's first solo release (she's the heart of the Fugees) is a landmark for modern R. & B. She's produced the album with a strong ear for earthy, live sounds and spare electronic innovation, and the songs rise above the standard clockwork beats and breathy synthesizers of most of today's best-selling artists (Brandy, Babyface, etc.). The tunes shuffle along with easy, reggae-influenced grooves and call-and-response vocals that echo the best of Atlantic-label recordings. It's a revelatory album, never didactic, that delivers a punch as strong and heartening as that of a Bob Marley record.

"Rufus Wainwright" (DreamWorks)—Boasting one of pop's most distinctive and unusual voices—he sings with the brashness of Ethel Merman and the raucous kick of Peter Allen—this twenty-five-year-old piano man's début album showcases his precise, intimate arrangements (some with the help of Van Dyke Parks). He's the best of the new artists this year, and his strongly emotive songs show a cinematic, lyrical grasp of unrequited love that can make you swoon.

"Mutations," Beck (Geffen)—Having made a career of turning the mainstream on to musical eclecticism, Beck has turned out his most straightforward album to date. "Mutations" oscillates between intimate ballads and dance-floor breakdowns, effortlessly resolving Beck's uniquely bipolar popularity (indie releases have made him an underground hero even as the major-label "Odelay" has secured his stardom). Off-kilter but never incoherent, "Mutations" is a deceptively low-key masterwork.

with a stylized representation of a cat-headed insect being gripped by an elegant hand—an image unique in Mesoamerican art. Through Feb. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Jackson Pollock," a comprehensive retrospective—the first in the United States since 1967—of the artist many regard as the most influential American painter of this century. It would be hard to fault the installation or the choice of works: in addition to many smaller drawings and canvases, the Modern has secured all of the major large pictures, from the mural that Peggy Guggenheim commissioned for her foyer in 1943 to the late "Blue Poles" (1952). Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Focus: Pollock and Printmaking." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Dubuffet to de Kooning: Expressionist Prints from Europe and America." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles." Through Jan. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Rendezvous: Masterpieces from the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Museums" includes works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Kandinsky, and other modern masters. Through Jan. 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Duane Hanson (1925-96) retrospective brings together a comprehensive selection of the artist's amazingly realistic re-creations of middle-class Americans: life-size casts of construction workers, a tough-looking cop, a weary maid, a bored flea-market vender. The use of actual clothing and objects completes the illusion; in "Man on a Lawn Mower," finished shortly before the artist's death, and exhibited for the first time here, the figure is seated on a tractor, clutching a can of soda. The tone of ironic condescension, however faint, sometimes overpowers the work: it can be difficult, even on the second or third glance, to distinguish the real tacky tourist from the sculptured tacky tourist, and the viewer is left with only the technique to admire (it is, admittedly, mighty impressive). Whatever you do, don't stand still. Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Ray Johnson: Correspondences" chronicles the work of the founder of the "New York Correspondence School," one of the earliest examples of the mail-art movement. Opens Jan. 14. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings. Through March 28. . . . ¶ "Pale Guide to Transparent Things," an exhibition of photographs by Seton Smith. Through April 4. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter" offers some four hundred examples of lepidoptera in a specially constructed vivarium. Through Feb. 28. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch," an exhibition of a hundred large-scale court and religious paintings, manuscripts, and enamels done in the representational style that flourished under the dynasty that ruled Iran from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Domestic Transformations: Working in Brooklyn" features work by borough residents Ann Agee, Ron Baron, Jean Blackburn, and Andy Yoder. Through March 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—"A Treasure-House of Books: The Library of Duke August of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel" presents printed material and manuscripts from the personal collection of the dedicated bibliophile, including a ninth-century illuminated gospel from Tours and a presentation copy of the "Theuerdank," a poem commissioned by Emperor Maximilian to mark his successful courtship of Maria of Burgundy. Through Feb. 6. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"'In thy map securely saile': Maps, Atlases, Charts, and Globes from the Lawrence H. Slaughter Collection" unrolls the richly detailed navigational guides used by sea captains and other New World explorers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, showing signs of careful use (pencil marks, pinpricks from compass needles) among their wind roses, scrolled cartouches, and coats of arms. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Short List—**LAURA ALEXANDER,** Viridian, 24 W. 57th St. 245-2882. Through Jan. 23. . . . **SUSANNA COFFEY,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through Feb. 6. . . . **HENRY DARGER,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734. Through March 13. . . . **ELAINE DE KOONING,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Through Jan. 30. . . . **WILLIAM DUNLAP,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Jan. 30. . . . **BRAD DURHAM,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through Jan. 30. . . . **TIMOTHY HAWKESWORTH,** Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323. Through Jan. 30. . . . **MARCIA GYGLI KING,** Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-5888. Through Jan. 23. . . . **ROBERT LA HOTAN,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Through Feb. 6. . . . **DAMIAN LOEB,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Feb. 13. . . . **GLENN PRIESTLEY,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through Feb. 3. . . . **NOT VITAL,** Baron/Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. 581-9191. Through Feb. 20. . . . **WILLIAM WOOD,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through Feb. 13.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Moira Dryer (1957-92) and **Shirley Wiitasalo**—Dryer, who died several years ago of cancer, was regarded as one of the most promising abstract painters of her generation. The works displayed here, mostly from the eighties, recall a number of her characteristic formal innovations—e.g., the inclusion of free-standing sculptural elements as integral parts of her works. The better ones display her characteristic aqueous, drizzly handling of paint. Pairing Dryer with Wiitasalo was a good idea—the latter also favors washed-out, spatially ambiguous images. Through Jan. 23. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

Félix González-Torres (1957-96)—Not exactly a retrospective, this show focusses on the artist's work from 1986 to 1990. Some of them are well known: his signature stacks of paper, which mimic Minimalism in form even as the invitation to take the sheets implies a criticism of the self-contained art object. Other pieces—round canvases to which he has affixed small photos of crowds—are less familiar. There is a delicacy and unease in these works, although within the vast space of the Rosen gallery many of them seem stranded, and their intimate quality is lost. Through Jan. 23. (525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

Short List—**DAVID DUPUIS,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through Feb. 6. . . . **TONY FITZPATRICK,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Jan. 30. . . . **RAINER GANAHL,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Jan. 30. . . . **NINA KATCHADOURIAN,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Feb. 13. . . . **JOHN KIRCHNER,** Foster, 529 W. 20th St. 966-9024. Through Feb. 13. . . . **MICAH LEXIER** and **JONATHAN SELIGER,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Both shows through Feb. 6. . . . **TIMUR NOVIKOV** and **JAAN TOOMIK,** I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Both shows through Jan. 23. . . . **TAM OCHIAI** and **STEVEN PARRINO,** Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Both shows through Jan. 30. . . . **ALIX PEARLSTEIN** and **MICHAEL BALLOU,** Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323. Both shows through Feb. 6. . . . **SCOTT REEDER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through Feb. 27. . . . **MIGUEL ANGEL RIOS,** Weber, 529 W. 20th St. 691-5711. Through Feb. 6. . . . **WILLIAM STEIGER,** Thatcher, 529 W. 20th St. 675-0222. Through Feb. 6. . . . **RUDOLF STINGEL,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Feb. 13. . . . **LAWRENCE WEINER,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through Feb. 27.

TABLES FOR TWO

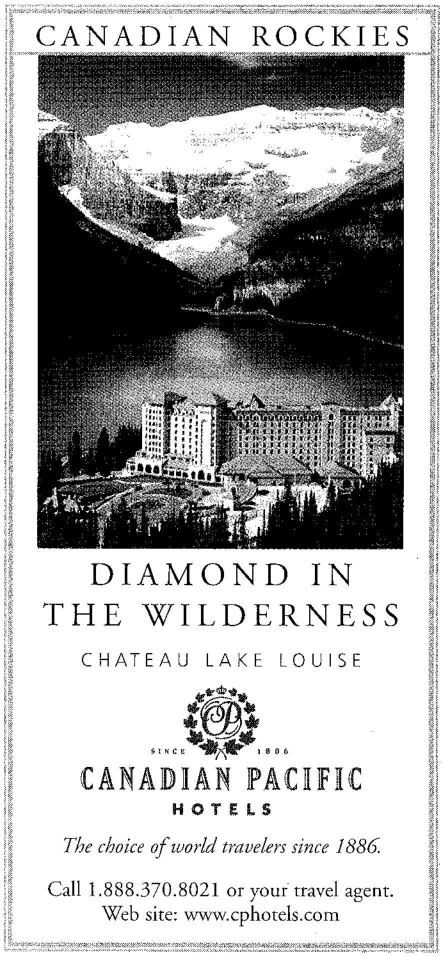
La Lunchonette, 130 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 675-0342—Jean-François Fraysse, the chef of this bordello-red bistro in Chelsea, a former longshoremen's bar, moved to the States twenty years ago to act in the theatre. "But with this accent," he says, "forget about it." Fraysse came by his earthy culinary style from watching his grandmother, whose cooking on the family farm was well known around the Languedoc region of France, where Fraysse spent his childhood. "She was wake upping at five-thirty and she never stop. I have a feeling I was from another century."

Naturally, La Lunchonette's house specialties evoke memories of French home cooking. Fraysse adds lamb-and-garlic sausage to his duck cassoulet to make the rich stew even more delicious, and his foie-gras terrine comes topped with a good inch and a half of goose grease. Even the salads are extra-calorific—endive with Roquefort; marinated beets and greens in a thick vinaigrette. But patrons should be wary of flourishing their high-school French: on a recent visit, a diner who ordered *civet,* a rabbit stew in red wine with plums, ended up with *cervelles,* veal brains in black butter. Both are forthright dishes without a soupçon of nouvelle cuisine (which Fraysse disparages as "food for going to Neptune"). Still, one is not the other.

Malva Max, Fraysse's American wife and the co-owner of the restaurant, deals with such glitches in a style descended from the American tradition of hash-slinging, do-it-all waitressing. She's passed her good-humored manner on to the staff, and it's a nice counterpoint to Fraysse's occasional episodes of Gallic pique. As one waitress said recently, explaining why you could order coffee with the crème caramel but not espresso or cappuccino, "We're French. We don't have what people want." (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, Saturdays and Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées $12-$26.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jannis Kounellis—One of the founding figures of the Italian Arte Povera movement, Kounellis, in his recent shows, has tended toward the lackluster. But within the vast cavern of the Ace gallery, he pulls off a terrific coup de théâtre. Playing off Minimalism's fascination with industrial materials, Kounellis often uses very large steel I-beams in the numerous sculptures on display. On the other hand, in keeping with Arte Povera's fascination with natural materials, he resorts to worn burlap sacks and (perhaps in a throwback to an infamous piece that included eleven



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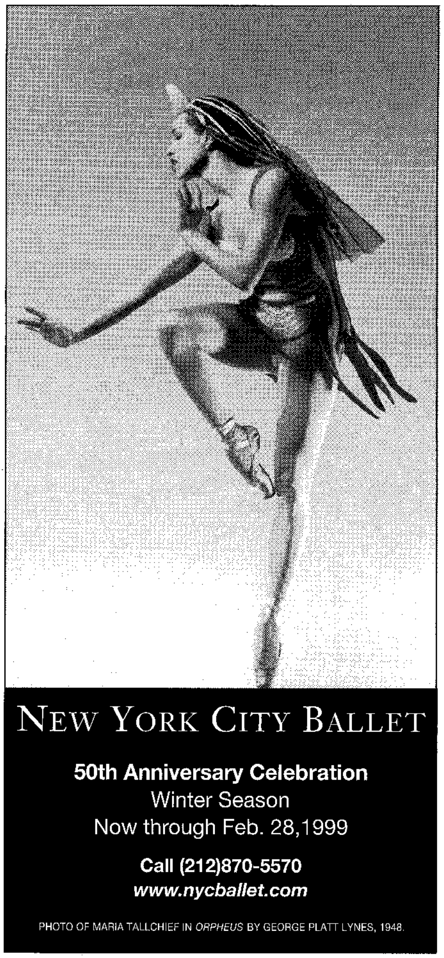

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PHOTO OF MARIA TALLCHIEF IN *ORPHEUS* BY GEORGE PLATT LYNES, 1948.

live horses) several caged starlings. Through Feb. 6. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

"North and South Connected"—A small but important show outlining affinities both subtle and strong between some postwar abstract artists and the pre-Columbian civilizations. In some cases, it's a matter of direct quotation: a small, vividly colored grid painting by Alfred Jensen makes enigmatic use of the numbering system of the Maya; an exquisite weaving by Anni Albers (Josef's wife) is fringed with braided string, suggestive of quipu, the system of knots used by the Incas for cross-country communication. Other connections are more oblique, as in the hieroglyph-like images of a classic painting by Adolph Gottlieb. The twentieth-century works here are well chosen, but the ancient Peruvian textiles are magnificent. Through Jan. 30. (Torres, 140 Greene St. 431-5869.)

Short List—**BRIDGET BUSUTIL,** Wickiser, 568 Broadway. 941-1817. Through Jan. 21. . . . **JAN KNAP,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Jan. 20. . . . **MANUEL NERI,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Jan. 30. . . . **ROXY PAINE,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Feb. 13. . . . **PETER PLAGENS,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. 966-6676. Through Jan. 27. . . . **DAVID RABINOWITCH,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Feb. 5. . . . **JULIÃO SARMENTO,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through Jan. 23. . . . **TOM SHANNON,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through Feb. 6. . . . **SANDY SKOGLUND,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through Feb. 13. . . . **GORDON TERRY,** Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083. Through Feb. 6.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—A weekful of Americana auctions. Jan. 15: A morning sale of furniture, silver, prints, and folk art; in the afternoon, the first of three sessions devoted to the John Gordon collection of Americana, comprising paintings, furniture, rugs, sculptures, weathervanes, and pottery (with collectors' eyes trained intently on an eighteenth-century Newport chest by Job Townsend II and on one of Edward Hicks's sixty-odd renditions of "The Peaceable Kingdom." . . . ¶ Jan. 16: The Mr. and Mrs. James L. Britton collection of important American furniture and decorative arts, including numerous high-end Chippendale pieces from Philadelphia and New York; also an afternoon sale of furniture from other owners. . . . ¶ Jan. 19: The concluding sessions of the Gordon collection. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Sotheby's—Jan. 15: Important Americana, including historical and natural-history prints (by Audubon and others), porcelain, and silver. . . . ¶ Jan. 16: American folk art, including important twentieth-century pieces from the estate of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr., who founded the Museum of American Folk Art. . . . ¶ Jan. 17: American furniture. . . . ¶ Jan. 19: An arcade sale of moderately priced furniture and decorative art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Doyle—Fine furniture, decorative art, and paintings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Jan. 13.)

Swann—An auction of books about travel and exploration, with an emphasis on Tibet and Central Asia. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Jan. 14.)

Winter Antiques Show—The forty-fifth year of this prestigious affair, in which international exhibitors complement the core of the show—stateside dealers of Americana. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Jan. 15-19, with a benefit preview on Jan. 14. Continues through Jan. 24. For information, call 718-292-7392. . . . **NOTE:** A selection of items from the New York State Historical Association and a group of watercolors by the late interior designer Mark Hampton—not for sale—will be on display throughout the show.)

Antiques at the "Other" Armory—A hundred dealers, including many in the "new guard" of the antique business, offer a bit of everything. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. Jan. 15-17. For information, call 255-0020.)

Americana at the Piers—Four hundred dealers. (Piers 90 and 92, Twelfth Ave. from 50th St. to 55th St. Jan. 16-17. For information, call 255-0020.)

Sacred Heart Antiques Show—A wide-ranging assemblage in an opulent setting. (Sacred Heart School, 1 E. 91st St. Jan. 15-17. For information, call 722-4745.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Dick Arentz—Panoramic platinum prints of sites in Europe, Canada, and the United States, many of which—the famous White House ruin at Canyon de Chelly, a stately tree in a Scottish field—look like they might have looked a hundred years ago. Arentz's Grand Canal, in Venice, is hazy, romantic, and timeless, but his plain image of the lighthouse at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, taken in 1997, is infused with sadness. Through Jan. 16. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

Charles Pratt—"The Edge of the City," an engrossing selection of vintage black-and-white prints of urban life in New York and New Jersey in the early sixties. Through Jan. 23. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

"Skin/Deep"—A historical survey of "interior imaging," from X-rays to M.R.I.s, including works by Andrew Bush, Helmut Newton, Vik Muniz, and Annie Leibovitz. Through Jan. 16. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

International Center of Photography—During the summer of 1959, twenty-five-year-old Bruce Davidson's world was the corner of 17th Street and Eighth Avenue, in Brooklyn, where he hung with a teen-age gang called the Jokers. All the tight-T-shirt-wearing, tattooed hoodlums (by today's standards they look clean-cut) were tough and indisputably cool; none appear miffed by a photographer shooting them at their regular haunts—Prospect Park, Helen's Candy Store, underneath the Coney Island boardwalk. Davidson captured his subjects at unexpectedly serene moments—a couple embracing in the back seat of a car, a girl pinning up her hair in the reflection of a cigarette machine—bringing to the surface a softness in presumably hardened youth. Still, a loneliness pervades these shadowy black-and-white prints, reminding us that these kids' homes were the streets, and probably would be for some time. Through March 7. . . . ¶ "Intimate City: The Photographs of Thomas Roma." Through March 7. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Man Ray: Photography and Its Double," a large show of works from the artist's archives, which are housed at the Pompidou Center, in Paris. Through Jan. 24. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**BRUCE CRATSLEY,** Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays; through Feb. 14. . . . **LYNN DAVIS,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 16. . . . **PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through Jan. 16. . . . **LARRY GIANETTINO,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **KENRO IZU,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Jan. 23. . . . **GEORGE KRAUSE,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 23. . . . **NICHOLAS NIXON,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 23. . . . **FAZAL SHEIKH,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 16.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Riffs

Nineteen ninety-nine marks the centenary of the birth of Duke Ellington, and, conveniently, the roughly one hundred years of the hot music that bubbled up from places like New Orleans, Memphis, and Chicago to become jazz—the soundtrack of the twentieth century. Several recent books attempt to make sense of the unruly genre in which such different personalities as Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael, Frank Sinatra, Charlie Parker, and Charles Mingus all flourished.

In **Lost Chords** (Oxford), the trumpeter Richard M. Sudhalter risks controversy by declaring that the familiar genesis theory of jazz as a strictly black cultural institution is little more than "junk-food history." In outlining the contributions of white musicians and celebrating the potent, mixed heritage of jazz, Sudhalter offers vivid portraits of early giants who were later gobbled up by the sheer force of bebop: Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Bobby Hackett, and the brawling Dorsey brothers. Further evidence of the great contributions made by white musicians is presented in **Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings** (Yale), Peter Pettinger's biography of the piano legend whose work with Miles Davis yielded perhaps the most enduring of all modern jazz albums, "Kind of Blue."

Another race-blind friendship is the focus of Francis Paudras's **Dance of the Infidels: A Portrait of Bud Powell** (Da Capo). Paudras, a French graphic artist, and Powell, the brilliant yet erratic bebop pianist, became inseparable in the late fifties, during Powell's memorable engagements in Paris. Paudras's memoir, finally available in English, was the basis for the 1986 film "'Round Midnight." (Thelonious Monk, Powell's other best friend, is the subject of Leslie Gourse's **Straight, No Chaser,** published last year by Schirmer.) In Gary Giddins's optimistically titled **Visions of Jazz: The First Century** (Oxford), the noted critic has assembled a comprehensive—and sharply opinionated—retrospective of important musicians, from Al Jolson to John Coltrane to Joshua Redman. His rumination on Powell's piano fireworks goes to the heart of what's great about jazz of any color: "We are always listening beneath the surface for premonitions, disclosures, revelations, the deepest and most profane secrets."

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Books.

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The Paths of History

THE HAUNTED WOOD

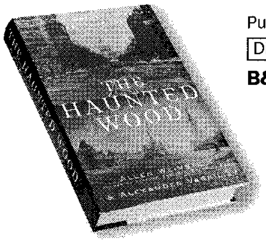
by Allen Weinstein & Alexander Vassiliev

A former KGB agent joins the author of *Perjury: The Hiss–Chamber Case* to write a comprehensive look at Soviet espionage in America during the Stalin regime. Drawing on previously classified KGB archives from the 1930s, '40s and '50s, the authors explore the surprising extent of Communist infiltration in the U.S. government—reaching from the corridors of Congress into the inner offices of the White House. (Random House)

Pub. Price: $30.00

Discount 30%

B&N Price: $21.00



BEYOND HITLER'S GRASP

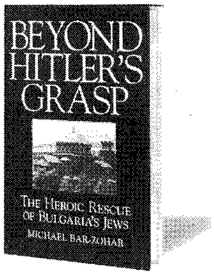
by Michael Bar-Zohar

The rescue of more than 50,000 Bulgarian Jews from the Nazi death camps in March, 1943, stands as one of the Second World War's greatest and most heroic events. Presenting material never before published, internationally noted scholar Michael Bar-Zohar brings the dramatic true story to light in vivid detail. (Adams Media)

Pub. Price: $24.95

Discount 30%

B&N Price: $17.46



LINCOLN'S MEN

by William C. Davis

In Abraham Lincoln, Union soldiers had much more than a Commander in Chief—they had a leader who suffered as they did. Civil War historian William C. Davis sheds new light on Lincoln's significance with the letters and diaries of thousands of Union soldiers, men who—in their unified and unwavering support of their president—found the strength to win. (Free Press)

Pub. Price: $25.00

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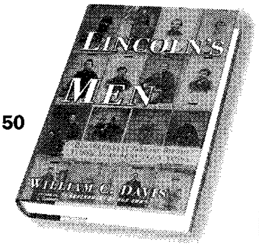
B&N Price: $17.50



THE COUSINS' WARS

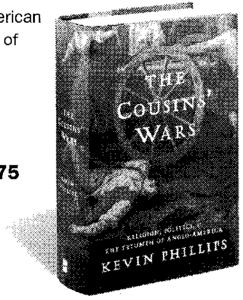
by Kevin Phillips

The bestselling author of *Arrogant Capital* offers a spellbinding history that explores the relationship between the English Civil War, the American Revolution and the American Civil War. Kevin Phillips examines the ideologies that fueled these conflicts and presents a cohesive portrait of Anglo-American ascent to a position of world leadership. (Basic)

Pub. Price: $32.50

Discount 30%

B&N Price: $22.75



LETTERS OF A NATION

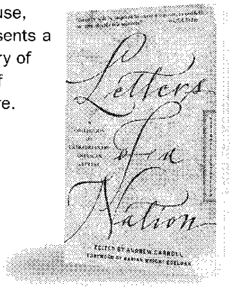
edited by Andrew Carroll

Presidents, pioneers and cultural icons speak for themselves in this collection of American letters. With a selection that includes an English settler's letter to his wife, Harry S. Truman's written defense for using the atomic bomb and Elvis Presley's missive to Richard Nixon on battling drug use, *Letters of a Nation* presents a unique, first-hand history of more than 350 years of American life and culture. (Broadway)

Pub. Price: $15.00

Discount 20%

B&N Price: $12.00



CONTROVERSIES AND COMMANDERS

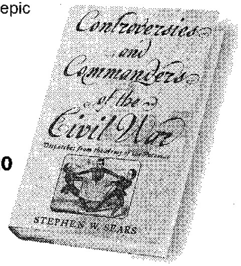
by Stephen W. Sears

This new history from renowned Civil War historian Stephen W. Sears follows the footsteps of the Union's Army of the Potomac throughout the war, from Antietam to Fredericksburg and on to their greatest victory at Gettysburg. This is the gritty story of America's bloodiest war in all its grandeur and horror—from its epic battles to its most private moments. (Houghton Mifflin)

Pub. Price: $26.00

Discount 30%

B&N Price: $18.20



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

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Metropolitan Opera—**kátya kabanová,** by Janáček, with Catherine Malfitano, Eva Randová, Katarina Karnéus, Peter Straka, Mark Baker, Paul Charles Clarke, and Sergei Koptchak; conducted by Charles Mackerras. (Jan. 13 and Jan. 16 at 8.) . . . **die fledermaus,** in a version that features a book and English-language dialogue by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, with Carol Vaness, Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, Jochen Kowalski, Michael Schade, Neil Rosenshein, Earle Patriarco, and (in the speaking role of Frosch) actor Max Wright; Patrick Summers. (Jan. 14 at 8.) . . . **werther,** in a little-known version that Massenet prepared in order to bring the title role (conceived for a tenor) within the compass of a lyric baritone; with Rebecca Evans, Susan Graham, and Thomas Hampson; Donald Runnicles. (Jan. 15 and Jan. 19 at 8.) . . . **lucia di lammermoor,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Ramón Vargas, Anthony Michaels-Moore, and Alastair Miles; Carlo Rizzi. (Jan. 16 at 1:30.) . . . **pension fund gala:** James Levine conducts staged performances of acts from "Faust" (with Plácido Domingo and Roberto Scandiuzzi), "Stiffelio" (with Veronica Villarroel, Mr. Domingo, and others), and "Carmen" (with Patricia Racette, Denyce Graves, and Mr. Domingo, among others). (Jan. 17 at 3.) . . . **la bohème,** with Cristina Gallardo-Domas, Ainhoa Arteta, Frank Lopardo, Mr. Michaels-Moore, and David Pittsinger; Marco Armiliato. (Jan. 18 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Collegium—New York has not proved adept at supporting a full-scale period-instrument orchestra. The most recent failure, in the early nineties, involved a group called the Classical Band, which failed to gain a strong following before foundering in a bitter dispute between intractable musicians and ham-handed management. That left the field to such groups as Concert Royal and Bach-Works, which are essentially expanded chamber groups. Now a new orchestra appears on the scene, including many familiar faces from the Classical Band, with the eminent Dutch keyboard player Gustav Leonhardt as its titular music director (though he is expected to conduct only a few of the six New York concerts the group hopes to offer each year). In this opening program, he leads a suite from Rameau's *opéra-ballet* "Les Surprises de l'Amour," as well as Bach's Cantatas No. 214 ("Tönet ihr Pauken") and No. 30a ("Angenehmes Wiederau"), with soprano Roberta Invernizzi, countertenor David Walker, tenor Jeffrey Thomas, and bass James Weaver. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. Jan. 15 at 8. . . . ¶ LeFrak Concert Hall, Colden Center, Queens College, Flushing. Jan. 17 at 3. For information about tickets to either concert, call 717-9246.)

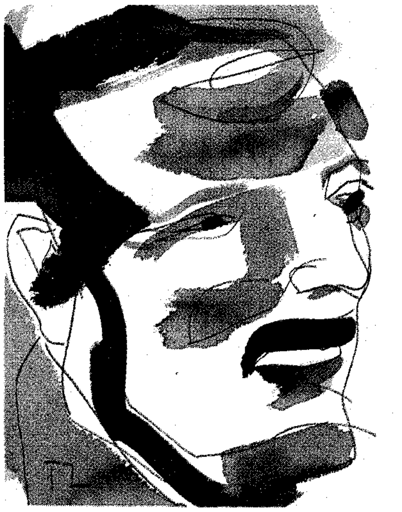
New York Choral Society—John Daly Goodwin directs Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 16 at 8.)

"Stabat Mater Dolorosa"—The well-known devotional poem describing Mary's suffering at the foot of the cross was written in the thirteenth century, possibly by the lawyer-turned-Franciscan monk Jacopone da Todi. It insinuated itself into the Roman Catholic liturgy as a sequence for Marian and Passion celebrations, was removed by the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, and was reinstated into the missal, in 1727, as an office hymn for the Feast of the Seven Dolours (September 15). From the fifteenth century on, composers have found the poem's emotional intensity irresistible. In this concert, a weeklong working seminar for professional choral directors and singers concludes as Charles Dutoit leads interpretations of the "Stabat Mater" by Verdi, Szymanowski, and Poulenc. The seminar participants are joined by the Robert Shaw Choral Institute Singers, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and soloists Christine Brewer (soprano), Marietta Simpson (mezzo-soprano), and Victor Ledbetter (baritone). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 17 at 2.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein conducts four symphonic works from the nineteen-sixties: Carter's Concerto for Orchestra, Lutoslawski's "Paroles Tissées," Dallapiccola's "Preghiere," and Berio's Sinfonia (with the Swingle Singers). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Jan. 17 at 3.)

BachWorks—Bradley Brookshire leads (from the harpsichord) Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 5, as well as his Cantatas No. 205 and No. 51 (the latter featuring soprano Olga Makarina). (St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 315 W. 22nd St. Jan. 17 at 5. Tickets at the door.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts a concert that includes Carl Czerny's Concerto for Piano Four-Hands (featuring Kenneth and Jean Wentworth) and Glazunov's Violin Concerto (with Dmitri Berlinsky). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 18 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 19 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)



MARATHON MAN: *An imposing frame and a technique that threatens to incinerate a Bösendorfer make Garrick Ohlsson a genuine giant of the keyboard. Having boldly traversed the complete works of Chopin in recent seasons, he now turns his attention to Liszt and the composers who most influenced that arch-Romantic: Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert. Liszt's music is dependably strenuous; coupling his B-Minor Sonata with Bach's "Goldberg" Variations (as he will on January 17, at Alice Tully Hall) or attaching other Lisztian devilry to Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata or Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy (which follow in March and April) is the pianistic equivalent of running two marathons in a single afternoon. Ohlsson, however, has what it takes to bring it off: utter technical assurance, keen musical intelligence, and more than a little chutzpah.*

THOMAS LIBETTI

RECITALS

Parnassus—Anthony Korf leads the United States premières of works by Patrick Burgan, Marius Constant, Pascal Dusapin, Philippe Hersant, Robert Suter, and György Kurtág (a recent song cycle, with soprano Susan Narucki, plus his "Hommage à Elliott Carter" for solo oboe, played by Marcia Butler). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 13 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Randall Hodgkinson performs Copland's Fantasy for Piano, he and Mark Peskanov play Mozart's G-Major Violin Sonata (K. 301), and cellist Ronald Thomas completes the ensemble for Brahms's C-Major Piano Trio (Op. 87). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Jan. 14 at 7:30 and Jan. 17 at 4.)

Saluting a Soprano—Every year, Chamber Music America, the national service organization for professionals engaged in "the intimate art," awards its Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award to a practitioner whose career has profoundly enhanced the field. At this year's convention (Jan. 15-17; for information, call 242-2022), the award goes to a singer, for the first time in its nineteen-year history; and no music lover is likely to gainsay that the American soprano Benita Valente is entirely worthy. On the eve of the convention, notable performers who have partnered her in vocal chamber music over the past three decades or so join in a wide-ranging concert in her honor. The extensive performing roster includes the Juilliard String Quartet, the voice-and-piano team of Joan Morris and William Bolcom, and a bevy of singers. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 997-7717. A benefit concert.)

Saluting a Mezzo-Soprano—On the eve of her sixty-fifth birthday, Marilyn Horne has arranged to be serenaded by sopranos Karita Mattila and Nicole Heaston, mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, countertenor Bejun Mehta, and baritone Brian Leerhuber, as a benefit for the vocal foundation she founded six years ago. Pianists Warren Jones, Martin Katz, and Brian Zeger assist. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 15 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.)

Lower Eastside Ensemble—The modern-music group, directed by pianist Marc Ponthus, offers a program that includes works by Webern and Berio, as well as Maxwell Davies's "Eight Songs for a Mad King" (with baritone Robert Osborne). (Third Street Music School Settlement, 235 E. 11th St., between Second and Third Aves. Jan. 15 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Takács String Quartet—Playing quartets by Haydn (in F Major, Op. 77, No. 2), Bartók (his Third), and Dvořák (in E-Flat Major, Op. 51). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 15 at 8.)

Russian New Year's Concert—Members of the Bachanalia Chamber Orchestra play small-scale works by Tcherepnin, Glière, Arensky, and one non-Russian—Poulenc, who dedicated his Oboe Sonata (here featuring Vladimir Lande) to Prokofiev. (Landon Gallery, 1926 Broadway at 64th St., third floor. 239-5906. Jan. 15 at 8.)

"Moondrunk"—A program intended to depict the psychological fragmentation of turn-of-the-century Vienna, including performances of Johann Strauss, Jr.,'s "Kaiser" Waltzes, piano pieces by Brahms and Schoenberg (interpreted by Sarah Rothenberg), Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" (fully staged, with soprano Lucy Shelton), and a shadow-puppet enactment of a nineteen-twenties recording of Goethe's poem "Die Erlkönig." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. Jan. 15-16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Haydn's Piano Trios in E Major (Hob. XV:28) and C Major (Hob. XV:27), Bach's F-Minor Sonata for Violin and Keyboard, Peter Lieberson's "Elegy," and Takemitsu's "Quatrain II," performed by violinist Pamela Frank, cellist Fred Sherry, clarinettist

David Shifrin, and pianist Peter Serkin. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 15 at 8 and Jan. 17 at 5.)

Quartet Sine Nomine—The Swiss foursome performs string quartets by Haydn (in C Major, Op. 64, No. 1) and Othmar Schoeck (his Second), in addition to Brahms's Piano Quintet (with pianist Philippe Bianconi assisting). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 16 at 8.)

Thüringer Salonquintett—Founded sixteen years ago in East Germany, this ensemble of two violins, cello, double bass, and piano has gained a following for its interpretations of classic palm-court and salon music. But the group has also encouraged composers to write pieces that bridge the gap between the Gilded Age and the ever-so-different modern world. In its New York début recital, the ensemble offers works from both prongs of its repertoire: pieces by Lehár and others who composed on the heels of the Strauss dynasty, and the premières of salon-inspired works by Michael Finegold, Ray Bokhur, and William Thomas McKinley (with clarinettist Jean Kopperud assisting in the last). (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 16 at 8:30.)

Maria Bachmann and Ilan Rechtman—The violinist and the pianist perform sonatas by Beethoven (his Seventh) and Debussy, as well as short pieces by Kreisler. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Jan. 17 at noon.)

Garrick Ohlsson—The pianist launches his three-recital exploration of Liszt and the composers he championed by performing Liszt's B-Minor Sonata, Bach's "Goldberg" Variations, and Liszt's transcription of Bach's Organ Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 17 at 2.)

Dominique LaBelle and Thomas Hampson—The soprano and the baritone, with pianist Craig Rutenberg, perform works by Britten, Fauré, Thomas Pasatieri (a première), and others. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347. Jan. 17 at 4.)

Ambrosia Trio—Performing piano trios by Haydn (in A-Flat Major, Hob. XV:14), Beethoven (the "Ghost"), and Brahms (in C Major, Op. 87). (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Jan. 17 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Allison Evans Henry—The organist presents an all-Bach concert comprising the Toccata and Fugue in F Major (BWV 540) and the E-Flat-Major and G-Major Trios. (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. Jan. 17 at 5. Admission by contribution.)

Trio Time—Flutist Immanuel Davis, violinist Jonathan Dinklage, and cellist Iris Regev play flute trios by Haydn and Vivaldi. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 17 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Cecile Licad—The pianist offers an all-Chopin recital that includes the G-Minor Ballade and the Twelve Études (Op. 10). (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. 924-5960. Jan. 19 at 7:30.)

Doris Stevenson—The pianist performs Frederic Rzewski's "De Profundis" and Robert Suderberg's "Six Moments for Piano," and is joined by violinist Maria Bachmann, clarinettist Igor Begelman, and cellist Semyon Fridman for chamber works by Michael Hersch, Gordon Beeferman, and David Kechley. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 19 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

GALATEA ENSEMBLE: Flutist Suzanne Gilchrist is featured in Bach's B-Minor Orchestral Suite and the première of Jaime Zenamon's "Llanura" (a flute concerto). (Turtle Bay Music School, 244 E. 52nd St. Jan. 13 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 753-8811.) . . . **MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA:** Music by Osvaldo Costa de Lacerda, conducted by Richard Auldon Clark. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Jan. 14 at 1. Admission by contribution.) . . . **RIALTO ENSEMBLE:** Vocal and instrumental music from Baroque Venice along with slide projections and dramatic readings. (Church of the Resurrection, 74th St. between Park and Lexington Aves. Jan. 15-16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 479-8561.) . . . **NEW YORK CONSORT OF VIOLS:** Music from Renaissance and Baroque Spain, Italy, and England, including several Sephardic composers. (Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, 257 W. 88th St. Jan. 16 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **GREGG SMITH SINGERS:** Works by Schütz, Ellington, and many others. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 914-376-8899.) . . . **PHILIP GLASS ENSEMBLE:** A live performance of Mr. Glass's score for a screening of the film "Koyaanisqatsi." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Jan. 16 at 8.) . . . **FLUTE DUETS:** Played by Michael Laderman and Connie Grossman. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 17 at 2. Tickets at the door.) . . . **NORTH/SOUTH CONSONANCE ENSEMBLE:** Works by Orlando Jacinto García, Enrique González-Medina, Max Lifchitz, JoyEllen O'Brien, and Harold Oliver. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 17 at 3. No tickets necessary.) . . . **CLARION MUSIC SOCIETY:** French Baroque chamber music. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Jan. 17 at 4. For information about tickets, call 772-4448.) . . . **CONCERTANTE CHAMBER PLAYERS:** Dvořák's A-Major String Sextet and Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 19 at 8.) . . . **MUSIC AT THE ANTHOLOGY:** Works by Ellington, Ferneyhough, Lisa Bielawa, and others. (Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave. 505-5181. Jan. 19 at 8.)

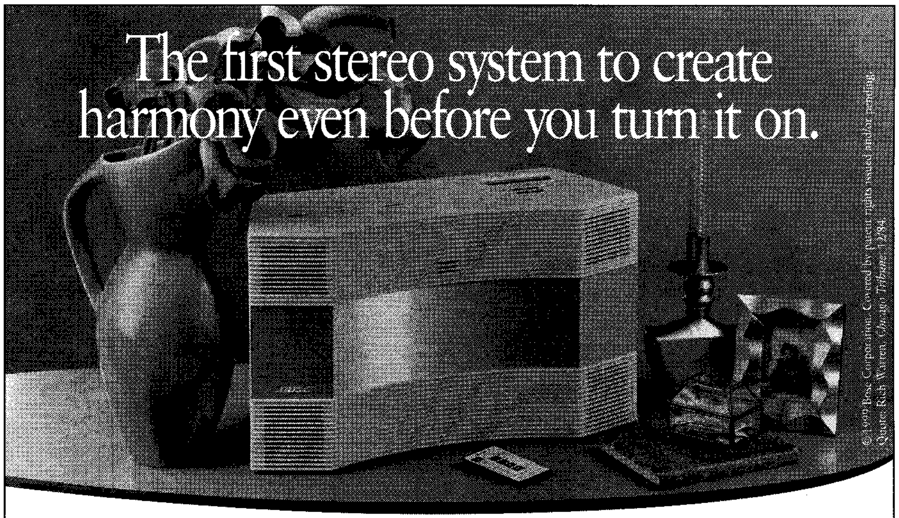
ABOVE AND BEYOND

A Lasting Impression—If during this week you wander beneath the towering palms and soaring glass ceiling of the World Financial Center's Winter Garden, in Battery Park City, you'll spot Italian craftsmen and a pair of New York City artists, most likely down on their knees, working with a technology that was invented at least two millenniums ago. The artists, Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel, and the craftsmen are assembling more than a million Italian-marble and Venetian-glass tesserae into a twenty-by-forty-foot mosaic on the floor. The elliptical image depicts drifting continents and a map of New York City centered around a human eye. After it's finished, on Jan. 19, it will be installed in the Chambers Street–World Trade Center subway station, not far from its point of assembly. On Jan. 13 at 12:30, Jones and Ginzel take a break from their work to talk about the mosaic and explain why they chose such an ancient process. "Some Roman mosaics are thousands of years old," Ginzel says. "Who knows how long the subway will last, but the mosaic may make for good archeology at some point."

Readings—Jan. 17 at 3: By Geoffrey O'Brien, from "The Times Square Story," his account of New York City in the nineteen-fifties. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 534-1672.) . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 8: By Helen Schulman, from her novel "The Revisionist"; Jenifer Berman, from her recent fiction; and David Grand, from his début novel, "Louse." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Jan. 17 at noon: Cartoonist Victoria Roberts discusses her work. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. 718-789-2493.) . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 7:30: Writer James Atlas moderates a discussion about the art of the biography, with Roy Blount, Peter Gay, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Edmund White. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

Walk—Jan. 18 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours observes Martin Luther King, Jr., Day with a stroll through Harlem. For more information, call 439-1090.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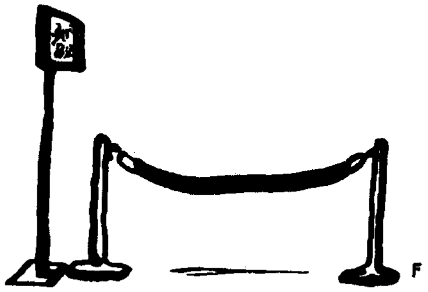


THE MOVIES

OPENING

At First Sight—The romantic tale of a blind man (Val Kilmer) who regains his sight. Also with Mira Sorvino, Kelly McGillis, and Steven Weber; directed by Irwin Winkler. Opening Jan. 15. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Dr. Akagi—Near the end of the Second World War, a Japanese general practitioner and a group of friends search for a cure for hepatitis. Directed by Shohei Imamura. In Japanese. Opening Jan. 15. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

In Dreams—Neil Jordan directed (and co-wrote, with Bruce Robinson) this drama of psychic visions and murder. With Annette Bening, Robert Downey, Jr., Aidan Quinn, and Stephen Rea. Opening Jan. 15. (84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore—Writer-director Sarah Jacobson's story about a girl on the road to sexual discovery. Opening Jan. 15. (Cinema Village.)

Varsity Blues—The story of what a winning high-school football team means to its senior players and to the people of a small town in Texas. Directed by Brian Robbins. Opening Jan. 15.

Virus—An alien-onboard-ship thriller, directed by John Bruno. With Jamie Lee Curtis, William Baldwin, and Donald Sutherland. Opening Jan. 15.

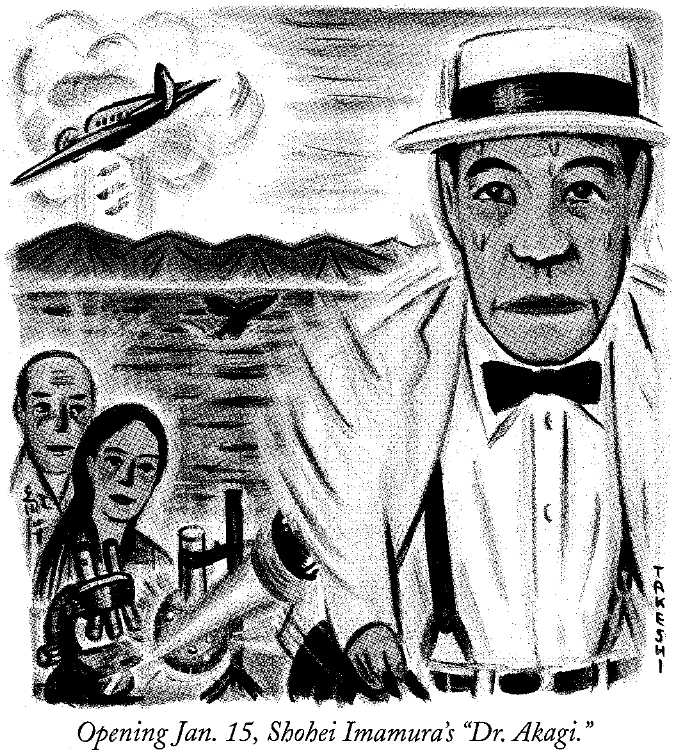
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Affliction—Nick Nolte, committing himself to a difficult part with a manly readiness that inspires affection, even awe, is Wade Whitehouse, a divorced policeman and hired hand floundering badly in a snowbound New Hampshire town. Both kindly and belligerent, Wade misses the meaning and rhythm of events, and reacts too much or too little, erupting in anger over what he should laugh off, ridiculing what he should take seriously. The movie is a kind of psychological thriller: Why is Wade so screwed up? (We find out.) Writer-director Paul Schrader flinches at nothing and takes us deep into the texture and causes of this man's failure; the movie, though relentless, is severely beautiful and finally exhilarating, like a sharp, cold wind taken in the face. With James Coburn as Wade's horrifying father, whose violent temper Wade has inherited; Willem Dafoe as his brother, who has sensibly (though rather contemptibly) withdrawn from the scene; Sissy Spacek as his girlfriend; and Mary Beth Hurt as his ex-wife. Schrader adapted Russell Banks's 1989 novel himself. Shot in rural Canada, near Montreal.—*David Denby* (1/11/99) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

American Gigolo (1980)—In this tale of designer redemption, Richard Gere dresses in Giorgio Armani, and the soundtrack pulses with Giorgio Moroder. Unfortunately, Gere's soul lies buried beneath the elegant layers of his wardrobe. The political and show-biz honchos of Beverly Hills, Malibu, and Palm Springs, married to their jobs, leave their wives to Gere, who does his damnedest to satisfy them. In the end, he gets what the writer-director, Paul Schrader, thinks he deserves: a good woman (Lauren Hutton) who stands by him even after he's suspected of murder. Only Schrader could have given us a movie so prurient and yet so puritanical.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 17.)

Chimes at Midnight ("Falstaff"; 1967)—One of Orson Welles's best and least-seen movies. Welles brought together the pieces of Falstaff that Shakespeare had strewn over the two parts of "Henry IV" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," with cuttings from "Henry V" and "Richard II," and fastened them into place with narration from Holinshed's "Chronicles" (read by Ralph Richardson). Though Welles's performance as Falstaff is short on comedy, it's very rich, very full. Oddly, we never really see the friendship of Falstaff and Prince Hal—played extraordinarily well by Keith Baxter—but John Gielgud's refined, monkish Henry IV gives the film the austerity it needs for the conflict within Hal to be dramatized. The film is a near-masterpiece. Welles's direction of the battle of Shrewsbury is unlike anything he ever did—indeed, unlike any battle ever done on the screen before it. It ranks with the finest of Griffith, Ford, Eisenstein, and Kurosawa.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 15.)



Opening Jan. 15, Shohei Imamura's "Dr. Akagi."

TAKESHI TADATSU

A Civil Action—Yet another movie about the redemption of a lawyer. Swathed in double-breasted Italian suits, Jan Schlichtmann (John Travolta), a flashy Boston ambulance chaser, gets caught up in a working-class town's battle with two large corporations that may have polluted their water and caused several deaths. Obsessed, Schlichtmann loses his professional judgment and sacrifices everything to the case. That the story is true (and based on an expertly written book by Jonathan Harr) doesn't make "A Civil Action" any more satisfying dramatically—there's a streak of obviousness in the moral melodrama that dampens one's interest. Robert Duvall gives a witty performance as a seemingly preoccupied and eccentric but actually devastatingly effective litigator; unfortunately, the big confrontation between Duvall and Travolta which the entire movie seems headed for never materializes. Written and directed by Steven Zaillian.—*D.D.* (1/11/99) (Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Elizabeth—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Art Greenwich Twin, BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The General—John Boorman's deadpan-cool celebration of the Irish thief and populist hero Martin Cahill, who died in 1994. As embodied by the great Irish actor Brendan Gleeson, Cahill may be the least glamorous gangster in motion-picture history. Gleeson has a thick neck, a massive forehead and jowls, and a large doughy body. Moving along Dublin's streets with the hood of his jacket pulled over his head, he might be an animated potato sack, or perhaps some creature—a hedgehog or beaver—concentrating on the terrain. Cahill is in fact a criminal genius and a fantastically aggressive personality. He always defeats expectations (even in death), and so does the movie. With Jon Voight as the Dublin police inspector who lacks the sense of humor to understand what Cahill is up to. In black-and-white.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Hilary and Jackie—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

The Hi-Lo Country—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Art Greenwich Twin and 64th and 2nd.)

Hurlyburly—Hollywood lowlifes awash in cynicism, drugs, desperation, and peculiarly elaborate pedantry about minor verbal distinctions in the absence of genuine feeling about anything. What seemed shocking onstage fifteen years ago in David Rabe's play now seems rancid and rather meaningless, though it's still funny. The actors appear to revel in the vileness of the characters they are playing. Sean Penn is particularly good as the unloved scuzzbag, Eddie. With Chazz Palminteri as a psychopathic actor, Kevin Spacey doing his affectless thing, Robin Wright Penn, Meg Ryan, Anna Paquin, and Garry Shandling. Rabe adapted his own play. Directed by Anthony Drazan.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The 1999 New Yorker Desk Diary

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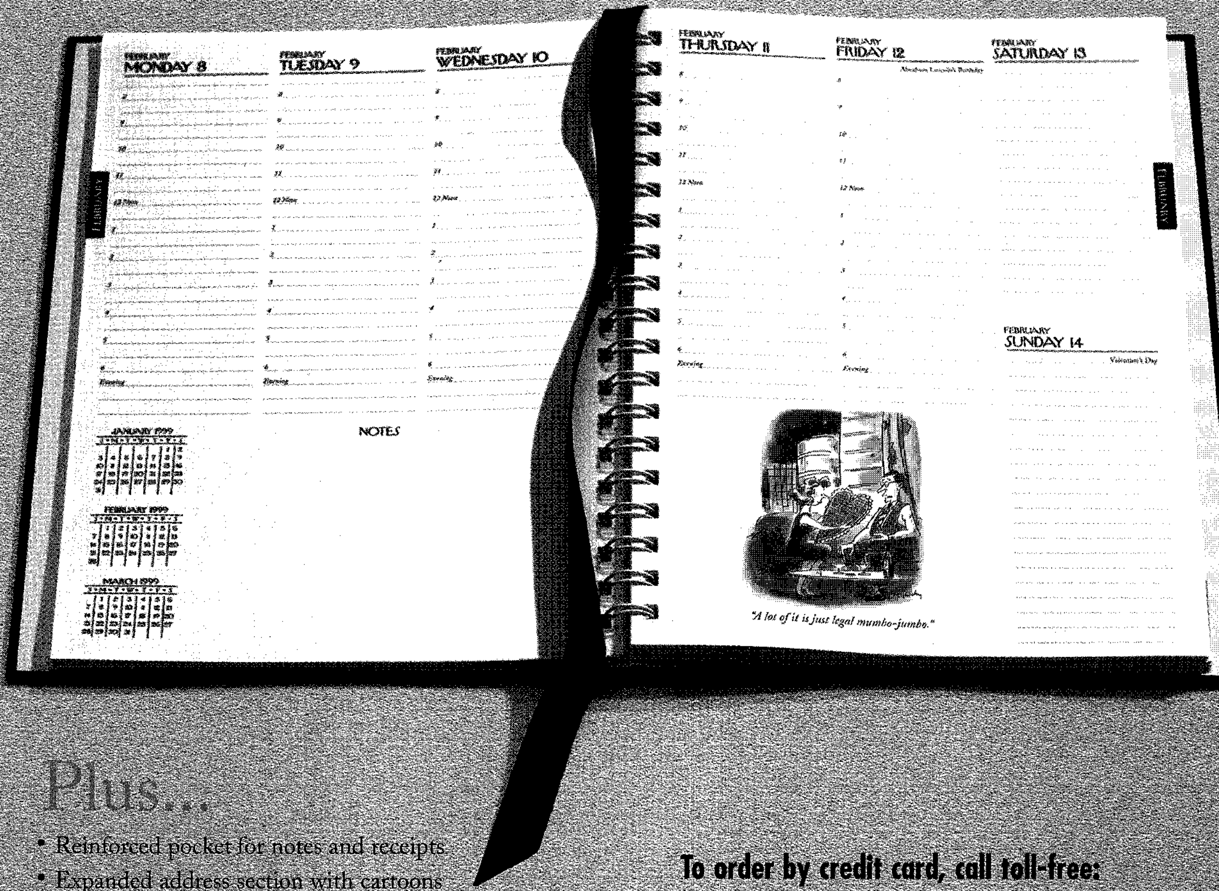
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It Happened Here (1966)—The unsung prototype of the "what if?" genre, this meticulous visualization of England under the Third Reich provokes terror in a matter-of-fact way. Among the many ghastly clever strategies of filmmakers Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, the most trenchant was to make a commonsensical Englishwoman (Pauline Murray) the antiheroine. Horrified by the violence of both the Nazis and the British partisans, she becomes a nurse in the socialist Immediate Action Organization, even though she worries that its procedures are a bit, well, "military." After four years of frenzied occupation, she believes that her country needs some order; she represents not the banality of evil but the evil of banality. Working with newsreel and propaganda techniques, the cinematographer Peter Suschitzky brilliantly transcended the film's budget ($21,000) and its stop-and-go shooting schedule. Tony Richardson raised the completion money and (along with Stanley Kubrick) donated 35-mm. film stock. A distributor-deleted scene of British fascists spouting anti-Semitic jabberwocky has been reinstated.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; through Jan. 14.)

CAROLYN GOWDY

Life Is Beautiful—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

The Prince of Egypt—A hefty new animated feature from DreamWorks. The idea is presumably to trump Disney at its own game; the method, more bizarrely, is to trump Cecil B. De Mille at *his* own game. This is a big, blustery, chest-beating picture; recent successes like "Toy Story" and "Antz" have suggested that the future of animation involves an ironic look at the comic intricacies of life, but this picture, which tells the story of Moses, offers the precise opposite. The few good jokes (most of them courtesy of the Pharaoh's high priests, voiced by Martin Short and Steve Martin) are swallowed up in this humorless epic. The cast is absurdly strong, led by Val Kilmer as Moses, and including Danny Glover, Ralph Fiennes, Jeff Goldblum, Sandra Bullock, Patrick Stewart, and Michelle Pfeiffer. Fiennes and Pfeiffer did their own singing—an act of remarkable bravery, given that the songs are by Stephen Schwartz. If his compositions for "Pocahontas" had you plugging your ears, wait till you hear his new stuff.—*Anthony Lane* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Union Square.)

Shakespeare in Love—A ripely emotional comedy-fantasia—concocted by director John Madden and screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—of how Shakespeare came to write "Romeo and Juliet." In 1593, young Will (Joseph Fiennes), a stud with liquid eyes and full lips, is just an unhappy and unproductive hack, jealous of the greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett). At first the movie comes at us too broadly, with many facetiously anachronistic jokes about the grubby professional routines of the theatre. But Will falls in love with the fictional heiress Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), and when these two poeticizing lovers climb into bed, and Shakespeare's quill begins to fly, the cleverness catches fire and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

Stepmom—A wealthy lawyer (Ed Harris) leaves his wife (Susan Sarandon) for a young photographer (Julia Roberts). Needless to say, his kids (Jena Malone and Liam Aiken) don't like the idea: they resent the presence of the interloper, who spends the rest of the movie trying to win them over. Just to complicate the issue, the wife learns that she has terminal cancer. It all adds up to a new and curious phase in the career of director Chris Columbus. He began by writing comedies, and graduated (or sank) to movies like "Mrs. Doubtfire," which surrounded the jokes with mush. Now the mush has taken over, and Columbus has slowed his pace in nervous deference to the solemnity of his plot (not to mention the opulence of his characters' lives). This does nobody any favors—particularly not actors as skilled as Sarandon and Harris, who do their best with a script that is itself incurable. Poor Julia Roberts is forced to indicate her photographic prowess by announcing "It's a wrap" at regular intervals; it's that kind of movie.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Thin Red Line—Terrence Malick's first film in twenty years is about a company of American troops at Guadalcanal. What happens, in essence, is that they come ashore and take an enemy-held hill; somehow, Malick, who was never a man to be hurried, spins this simple action out to nearly three hours. There is a dreamy prologue, in which a couple of soldiers go AWOL among contented villagers, briefly tasting a paradise that will soon be lost in war; there are repeated, lingering shots of local birds and beasts looking ready for trouble; and, above all, there is an unresolved confusion as to what, and whom, the movie should be about. The cast includes Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, Elias Koteas, John Savage, Woody Harrelson, George Clooney, and John Travolta, with strong performances from younger actors like Ben Chaplin and Jim Caviezel, but they all drift in and out of the action, never staying long enough to hold center stage. Malick seems to like his characters lonely—they talk to themselves in voice-over but rarely connect with other men. The result is a ravishingly strange mess: part bloody action movie, part pantheistic trip.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Union Square and Ziegfeld.)

Winstanley (1975)—A dynamic Eisensteinian montage opens this tribute to the fifteenth-century grassroots English socialist Gerrard Winstanley and his followers, the Diggers; soon after that opening, filmmakers Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo become so intent on historical authenticity that they confuse art with artifact. Still, despite awkward acting (by a largely nonprofessional cast) and undramatized turns of character, this story of the Diggers' establishment of an agrarian commune on St. George's Hill in Surrey has a gnarly underdog bite to it. The real-life drama is peculiarly English—it's a series of delicate negotiations punctuated by brawls. Contemporary Digger Sid Rawle provides bristling energy as the head of a group of Ranters; these blasphemous scoffers (who pillory Diggers and proper citizens alike) lend the film a charge that's close to Pythonesque.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; through Jan. 14.)

You've Got Mail—A regrouping of the team that brought you "Sleepless in Seattle": director Nora Ephron and leading players Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Once again, the story hinges on a couple who know each other for real only in the final minute—in this case, Joe Fox, who owns a chain of large bookstores, and Kathleen Kelly, who runs one small bookstore and finds herself put out of business. They meet and dislike each other without realizing that they've been waging a little light flirtation, under appropriate pseudonyms, via E-mail. The movie is sweetly undemanding, as you might expect, but the romantic suspense is zilch, and, compared with Ernst Lubitsch's "The Shop Around the Corner," on which Ephron based her script, everything feels spineless and slack. Hanks is badly underused, and it's left to the wonderful Steve Zahn (last seen in "Out of Sight"), as an employee in the small shop, to wring a little comic juice from the proceedings. The strangest performance, however, comes from the Upper West Side, which plays a neighborhood of uncomplicated bliss: gardens in bloom, happy street markets, an endless supply of literate conversationalists. Dream on, sister.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

A BUG'S LIFE: Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE CELEBRATION:** Regency and The Screening Room. . . . **CENTRAL STATION** (reviewed in our issue of 11/30/98): BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema. . . . **DANCING AT LUGHNASA:** 59th Street East Cinema and Union Square. . . . **DOWN IN THE DELTA:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **ENEMY OF THE STATE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Union Square. . . . **GODS AND MONSTERS** (11/9/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **LITTLE VOICE:** Beekman, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG:** Chelsea West, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **PATCH ADAMS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **PRIVATE CONFESSIONS:** Film Forum. . . . **THE SIEGE** (11/16/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A SIMPLE PLAN:** First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **STAR TREK: INSURRECTION:** Coronet Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE SWINDLE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema. . . . **THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **URBAN LEGEND:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WAKING NED DEVINE:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** Through Jan. 14: "It Happened Here" (†) and "Winstanley" (†). . . . From Jan. 15: "Mississippi Mermaid" (1969, François Truffaut; in French). . . . **THEATRE 3:** "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Films from Brazil; all in Portuguese, with English subtitles. Jan. 14 at 2:30: Short films. . . . Jan. 14 at 6: "O Quatrilho" (1995, Fábio Barreto). . . . Jan. 15 at 2:30: "Bahia de Todos os Santos" (1960, Trigueirinho Neto). . . . Jan. 15 at 6: "Little Book of Love" (1996, Sandra Werneck). . . . Jan. 16 at 12:30: "Miramar" (1997, Júlio Bressane). . . . Jan. 16 and Jan. 19 at 2:30: "How Angels Are Born" (1996, Murilo Salles). . . . Jan. 16 at 5: "Soccer Players" (1997, Ugo Giorgetti). . . . Jan. 17 at 2: "The Red Light Bandit" (1968, Rogerio Sganzerla). . . . Jan. 17 at 5: "Alma Corsária" (1993, Carlos Reichenbach). . . . Jan. 18 at 2:30: "Landscapes of Memory" (1996, José Araújo). . . . Jan. 18 at 6: "Barren Lives" (1963, Nelson Pereira dos Santos). . . . Jan. 19 at 6: "The Prophet of Hunger" (1969, Maurice Capovilla). . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 6:30 and Jan. 15 at 3: "Rachel's Daughter" (1997, Allie Light and Irving Saraf). . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 6 and Jan. 16 at 2:30: A program of films by Faith, John, and Emily Hubley. . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: "Chimes at Midnight" (†). . . . ¶ Three films directed by Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese, with English subtitles. Jan. 16 at 5 and Jan. 18 at 2:30: "Dersu Uzala" (1975). . . . Jan. 17 at 12:45 and Jan. 18 at 6: "Rashomon" (1950). . . . Jan. 17 at 2:30: "Akira Kurosawa's Dreams" (1990). . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 12:30: "Barrabas" (1919, Louis Feuillade; French intertitles, with simultaneous live English translation). All twelve parts, which total seven and a half hours, will be shown at this screening.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films starring Marcello Mastroianni; in Italian, with English subtitles. Jan. 13 at 2 and 6:30: "La Notte" (1961, Michelangelo Antonioni). . . . Jan. 13 at 4:20 and 8:50: "Sciopio the African" (1971, Luigi Magni). . . . Jan. 15 at 2 and 6:45 and Jan. 16 at 2: "Ginger and Fred" (1986, Federico Fellini). . . . Jan. 15 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Liza" (1972, Marco Ferreri). . . . Jan. 16 at 4:30: "The Last Moons" (1996, Guilio Bosetti). . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 2 and 6:15: "The Scarlet Empress" (1934, Josef von Sternberg). . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 4:10 and 8:25: "Queen Christina" (1933, Rouben Mamoulian). . . . ¶ From Jan. 17: The Eighth Annual New York Jewish Film Festival.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Jan. 16 at 2: "Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters" (1985, Paul Schrader). . . . Jan. 16 at 4:30: "Pickpocket" (1959, Robert Bresson; in French). . . . Jan. 17 at 5: "American Gigolo" (†).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 19 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "La Désenchantée" (1990, Benoît Jacquot; in French).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 17 at 7, the feature will be "Sunset Boulevard" (1950, Billy Wilder), with Gloria Swanson and William Holden.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through Jan. 28: A program of films that opened in 1998 that you might have missed, including "Seventh Heaven" (Benoît Jacquot; in French) and "The Cruise" (Bennett Miller).

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—A program of French films, 1958-98; in French, with English subtitles. Jan. 13 at 2:30 and Jan. 15 at 7:30: "Play-Time" (1967, Jacques Tati). . . . Jan. 13 at 6 and Jan. 16 at 2:30: "Drugstore Romance" (1978, Paul Vecchiali). . . . Jan. 15 at 2:30 and Jan. 16 at 7:30: "L.627" (1992, Bertrand Tavernier).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Jan. 13 at 8: "Gomez" (1998, Edward Berger). . . . Jan. 14 at 7 and 9, Jan. 15 at 9:30, and Jan. 16-17 at 4, 6, and 8: "Sonatine" (1993, Takeshi Kitano; in Japanese). . . . Jan. 14 at 8: "Intolerance" (1916, D. W. Griffith; silent). . . . Jan. 15 at 7: A program of short films by Peter Kubelka. . . . Jan. 16 at 5: Short films by Georges Méliès. . . . Jan. 16 at 7: "Aerograd" (1935, Alexandr Dovzhenko; in Russian). . . . Jan. 17 at 5: "130 Films" (1896-1905, Louis and Auguste Lumière). . . . Jan. 19 at 8: "Strike" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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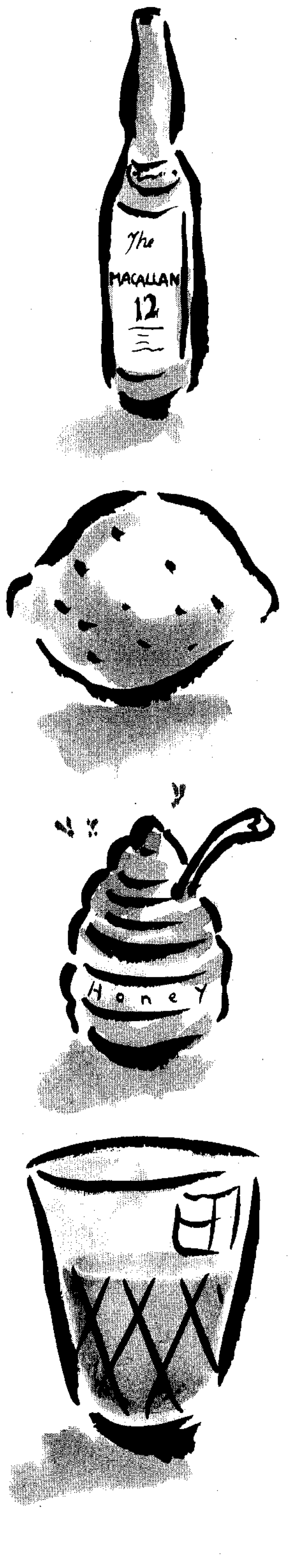
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-623-2770.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



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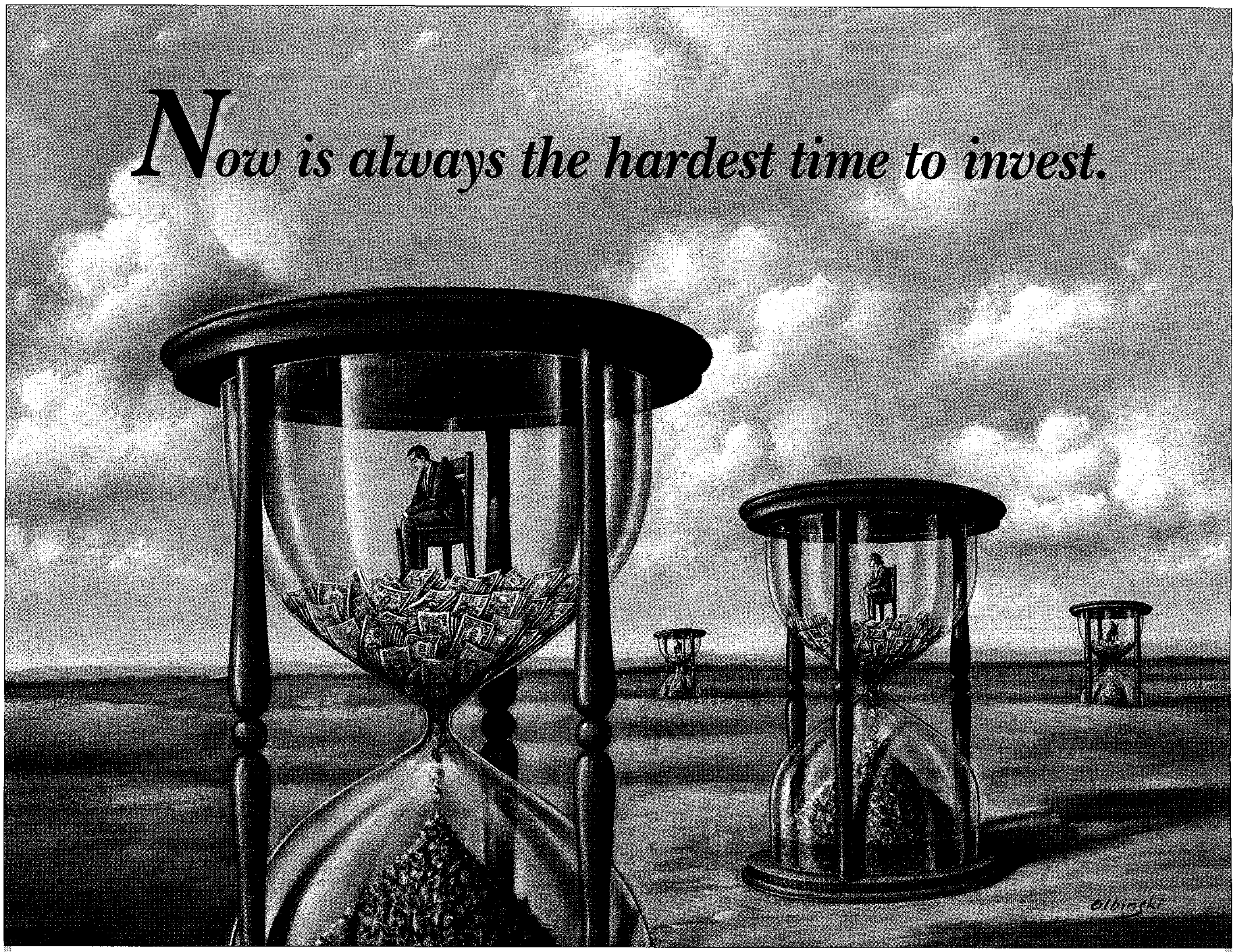
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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

Giving Clinton the silent treatment.

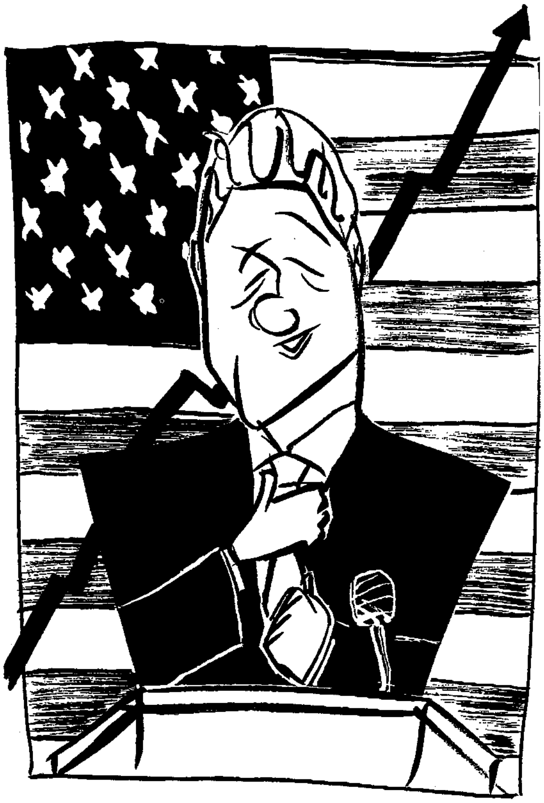
THERE are suggestions that Bill Clinton should delay, or perhaps even abandon, his State of the Union message this month, because of the impeachment trial now looming in the Senate. That seems harsh—a more severe penalty, perhaps, than censure. After all, some of Clinton's most memorable moments as President have come in his State of the Union addresses. In his very first, in 1993, he shocked his staff by ad-libbing vast passages. In 1995 he seemed to go on forever (the Washington pundits hated it; the public loved it—a foreshadowing of disconnects to come). And who can forget 1997, when the President's address shared a split screen with the verdict in the O. J. Simpson trial? Last year's fabulous performance marked another significant date in the history of cognitive dissonance, coming, as it did, just days after the Lewinsky revelation. But the 1999 edition promises to be the best ever. The President is on trial for high crimes and misdemeanors, and the State of the Union is, well, great. Almost every social and economic indicator is moving in the right direction.

Were it not for the sustained and mind-numbing space given to Lewinskiana, the media might have had no recourse but to focus on an unprecedented, almost unimaginable cascade of good news in the past year. The American economy has been sensational, thanks in part to bad fortune in the rest of the world: There is a global glut of commodities and muscle labor, which has lowered prices on everything from gasoline (below a dollar a gallon in most places) to electronic equipment (VCRs can be had for less than a hundred dollars). Unemployment remains low; the workforce-participation rate—that is, the percentage of people who have jobs—is at its highest level in history. Hourly earnings increased by an average of 3.8 per cent in 1998. Despite some well-publicized corporate layoffs, the shortage of skilled labor is a far more persistent problem in most of the country than a shortage of jobs. Interest rates are enticingly low. And what's left to say about the stock market?

Crime is down, significantly—and not just murder, which fell to its lowest level nationally since 1967. Robberies decreased by seventeen per cent in 1997 (the most recent statistics available), and the rate of property crimes, like burglary, is half what it was in 1973.

In April, the government reported that the birth rate among teen-agers had declined unexpectedly between 1991 and 1996—and especially among black teenagers. The latter was "now at the lowest level ever reported," according to the *Times*. (Welfare cases have also plummeted.) In December, the government reported that life expectancy had reached a record high (76.5 years), that the infant-mortality rate had reached a record low, and that deaths from AIDS had declined by forty-seven per cent in the past year.

In November, the *Times* reported—in a gratuitous, almost giggle-provoking eruption of good news—that "in a little-noticed environmental turnabout, Federal analysts report that Americans' use of water declined by about nine per-cent from 1980 to 1995—even as the United States' population grew by sixteen percent over the same period."



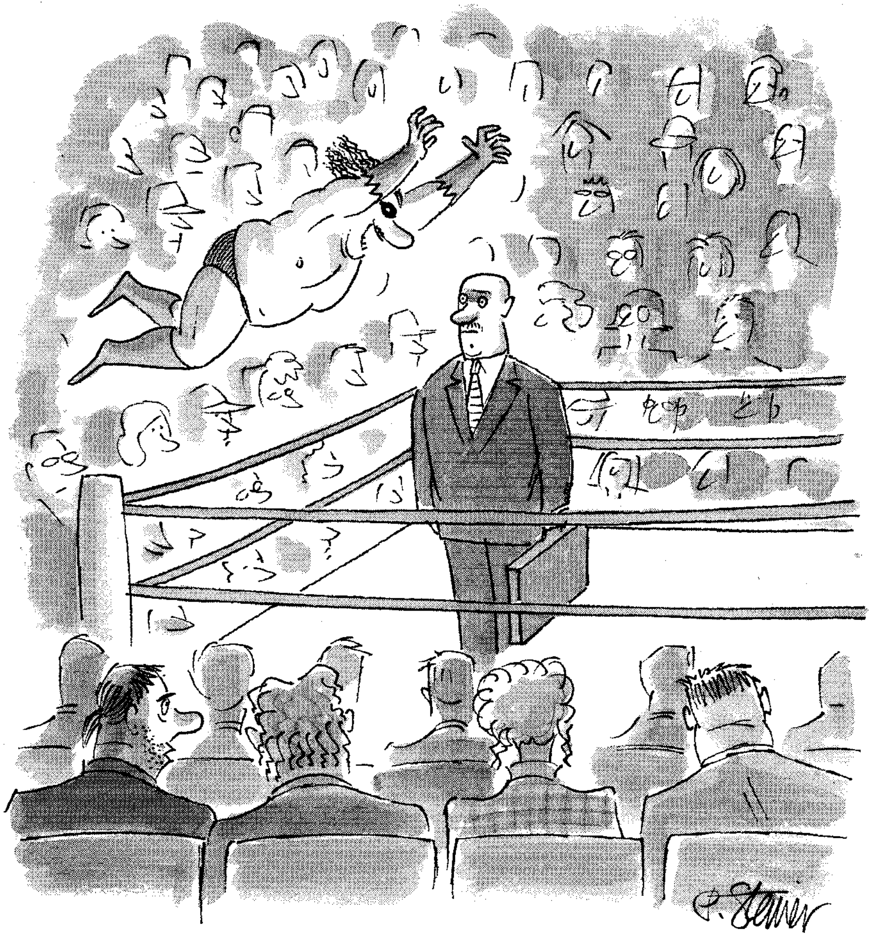
Of course, one can point to imperfections in this glowing state of national affairs—the widening income gap between rich and poor; the moral decadence and banality of the national culture. There are still too many out-of-wedlock births, too many bad schools, too much crime. And pessimists can argue, citing reason and history, that the good times can't possibly last. The markets could crash. Terrorists could release anthrax in New York City. Gary Bauer could win the New Hampshire primary.

Still, it might be in the best interests of national humility—and also an apt punishment for the crime of ridiculously inelegant philandering—to prohibit the President from delivering the State of the Union message this year. He'd likely be insufferable, taking too much credit for things he had too little to do with. And he'd never admit to the most

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

perverse corollary benefit of his misadventures: they have kept the Congress aimlessly preoccupied with trivia, instead of mucking up the nation's good fortune with new, unnecessary tax cuts or spending programs.

It is conventionally opined that Bill Clinton has been a beneficiary of these good times—that if the economy were sour he surely would have been tossed from office long ago for misleading the public about the precise nature of White House pizza-delivery procedures. Actually, the opposite seems more to the point: the placidity of the times has given official Washington the freedom to concentrate on political effluvia. Scandal is something of a luxury: it fills the newspapers when nothing serious is happening. If the times were bad—if there were an economic collapse or an external threat, if lives were on the line—the public would have no patience with the sexual obsessions of legislators and reporters. There would be serious work to do. Right now, there isn't very much. It's not our finest hour, but maybe we should be grateful anyway. —JOE KLEIN



"He seems to have lost his focus since he went into politics."

THE SPORTING LIFE

A street-basketball legend reflects on his N.B.A. brethren.

ON the very day, last week, that the millionaire members of the N.B.A. Players Association were milling around uptown, hashing out an end to their bilious labor dispute, Richard (Pee Wee) Kirkland took his elaborate ease in the New York offices of his sponsor, Nike, Inc., and told stories of the olden days. "My heroes weren't N.B.A.," Pee Wee said. "They all played in the Rucker league before I did: Pablo Robertson, Ronald Williams, Jackie Jackson. Jackson, who later was with the Globetrotters, is the only player I ever saw take a fifty-cent piece off the top of the backboard. He was on a team with Connie Hawkins, playing against Wilt Chamberlain. Wilt was shooting his big hook shots. Jackie went up so high he cupped Wilt's ball in his armpit."

These miracles occurred more than thirty years ago, at the Rucker Tournament, in Harlem, not far from where Pee Wee spun his own playground legend. He began playing basketball at the age of five, and got his nickname because he was usually the smallest player on a court filled with giants. N.B.A. greats such as Julius Erving and Nate Archibald say that Pee Wee Kirkland was one of the finest offensive players they ever faced. Pee Wee is credited, among other things, with inventing the art of trash talking, a skill that he took to the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1971, when he was convicted of loan-sharking. "I owned a mansion on Long Island and seven automobiles," Pee Wee said. "I was driving a convertible Rolls-Royce before I ever had a license. You figure the rest out."

Asked whether he was a greater basketball player or a greater criminal in his day, Pee Wee paused. "About even," he finally said. The second time he was sent to jail, it was for tax evasion: he recalled that he owed the federal government a one-year back-tax total of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. During his heyday, in the seventies, Pee Wee would show up for Rucker games in a Ferrari or a Mercedes and dispense thousands of ill-gotten dollars around the community. The experience, he said, makes him a dubious authority on the perils and temptations of today's big-money game. "Too much cash early in life creates a false perception of reality," he allowed.

Kirkland still looks like a basketball player. At the Nike offices, he was wearing blue sweatpants and a lime-green winter coat, and carried a briefcase made of soft Italian leather. At fifty-three, he has a slim build and the delicate, tapering fingers of someone who might make millions with his hands. Until last year, Kirkland coached the varsity basketball team at the Dwight School, a well-to-do private school on the Upper West Side. His teams won the New York State Independent School Championship two years running, sometimes beating other decorous, upmarket schools by fifty points or more. "I didn't care," Pee Wee said. "Basketball should be used to free kids from their inhibitions. I wanted to build confidence and eliminate fear in my players." Kirkland preaches a similar sermon each year to N.B.A. rookies entering the league, and also to children involved in School of Skillz, a motivational community program, which he runs with the help of Nike.

When the news arrived that the players' strike had been settled, Pee Wee said that he wasn't surprised. "If this labor negotiation had been left up to the players, it would have been solved long ago," he said. "But when the egos on the union negotiating committee got involved the issue became money, money, money." He isn't particularly envious of the huge amounts of cash being funnelled into the game. "There's a lot of talk about the dollar today, but for the player the reality is the roar of the crowd. The players missed that. It's why they came back."

In a small way, Pee Wee said, he misses that, too. He was actually drafted in the late sixties by the Chicago Bulls, but he walked out of training camp, because he felt that inferior players were getting preferential treatment. "If it hadn't been for playing at Rucker, I might have felt I'd wasted my talent, but I played against the greatest players of my time," he said. The Rucker league, where Kirkland made his name, still operates, although at a less dazzling level. "The street game doesn't attract the élite like it once did," Pee Wee said. "It's written into the pro contracts: If you play at places like Rucker, the insurance won't cover you. These days, if you get hurt playing street ball you're on your own."

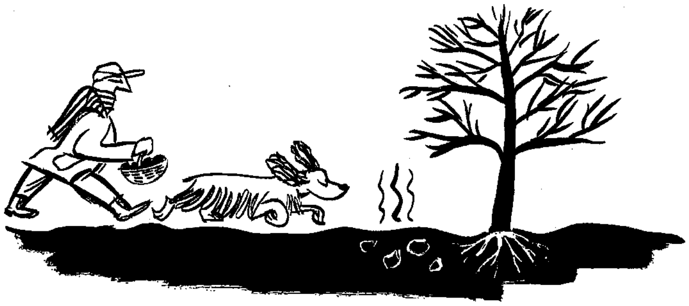
—Adam Platt

PET TRICKS

Will a New Jersey spaniel sniff his way to the bank?

Later this month, three men will travel to the tiny town of Hext, Texas, in the hope of finding black gold in the soil of the Texas Hill Country. One of the men, Roy Carver, is the president of the Oregon-based T-Bar Ranch, Ltd., which runs a hundred-and-seventy-eight-acre computer-monitored orchard in Hext planted with fifty-five thousand filbert trees. Another is Rosario Safina, a New Yorker who owns Urbani USA, one of the biggest importers and distributors of gourmet specialty foods in the country. Together, they are planning to produce and market North America's first large-scale crop of black winter truffles.

Black truffles are gnarled, intensely fragrant fungi that grow naturally only at the roots of nut, oak, and willow trees in Spain, Italy, and the South of France. In a bad harvest year, as this one was, they retail for as much as eight hundred dollars a pound. If all goes as planned, the T-Bar project will bring to market an average of no fewer than twelve thousand five hundred pounds of truffles each year.



But Carver and Safina can't do much without the third man: Pasquale Scricco, a fifty-two-year-old construction worker, who lives in Hopatcong, New Jersey. Scricco is the owner of a two-year-old cocker spaniel named Truffle, who is one of the only trained truffle-hunting dogs in the United States.

Traditionally, truffles were hunted with the help of pigs, which are good at detecting the fungi's distinctive muskiness inches underground. These days, dogs are the preferred truffle-detectors. "Pigs, if you're not careful, they're going to eat the truffles they find," Scricco said the other day. "And they're going to shit in the car."

One evening a few weeks ago, Safina drove out to New Jersey, to Scricco's house, to meet Truffle for the first time. The two men stood on the front porch and watched the dog show his stuff. With his nose flattened against the ground, Truffle, running in a Z formation, scoured the small, scrubby front lawn. He headed toward a shed, then scanned the ground around some bushes. He put his paws up on a metal lawn table and looked around. Nothing.

Scricco moved to New Jersey thirty-two years ago from the Abruzzi region of Italy, where truffle-hunting is big business. At some point, he got it into his head that there might be truffles in New Jersey. On a trip back to Italy in 1996, he traded a metal detector for the pick of a cousin's litter of truffle hunters. Scricco trained Truffle for a few months in Italy, and has continued the spaniel's education back in Hopatcong, using bits of hot dog soaked in truffle oil and buried in the yard. Every weekend, weather permitting, the two go hunting together in state parks and forests. They have yet to find a black winter truffle.

In fact, no one has ever found a black winter truffle in the Northeast, but Scricco is undaunted. "In Italy, you do miles and miles, you don't find nothing," he said. "Then, all at once, you find one this big." He cupped his hands in the shape of a softball. "This country is only a few hundred years old," he continued. "Maybe I'm the only one who's tried really, really hard. It's *hard* to find the truffle."

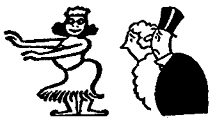
Since Truffle is a creature who is hardwired for a mission that he never gets to accomplish, it is understandable that he's a little high-strung. He cowers before visitors and barks frantically at passing cars. "A dog is just like a person," Scricco explained. "They get disgusted. When they don't find anything, they go crazy."

Safina had brought good news for the spaniel. Many of the Texas filbert trees, he told Scricco, had developed "burn" patterns at their bases—barren circles in the earth around the trunks that signify that truffles may be hoarding nutrients in the surrounding soil. And the orchard had been attracting animal intruders—opossums, skunks, and raccoons—in larger than usual numbers. T-Bar's scientists had been performing autopsies on them and were finding truffle spores in their digestive tracts. "When we go down there, we *will* find something," Safina proclaimed.

If all goes well, Scricco and Truffle could spend three months or more of the year in Hext, helping to harvest the crop and training other dogs. It's a dream of early retirement that the construction worker has always hoped for. "For me, it's nice sport," he said. "You enjoy the walk in the woods, plus you make a little bit of money. There's nothing wrong with that." —BRETT MARTIN

GILDED AGE DEPT.

Post-debs play midnight-at-the-oasis to open the Winter Antiques Show.



Last Thursday evening, Sloan Lindemann got a head start on the 1999 social season by opening her Park Avenue apartment to fifty or so of her peers. At six-thirty, she stood in her entrance hall, flanked by bare-chested men in Ali Baba pants, and handed out fezzes and flowing cotton scarves to her guests as they entered. Lindemann, a lively, dark-haired former assistant district attorney, is one of the honorary co-chairs of the Young Collectors' Committee of the annual Winter Antiques Show, which opens this week. Thursday's party was a warmup event to get New York's moneyed youth in the mood, and the mood Lindemann had in mind was Moroccan. "I got the scarves and fezzes this afternoon at Sam's Souk," she said. "Sam owes me. Everyone called me up asking what to wear, and I said, 'Go to Sam's Souk. It's next door to Sette Mezzo.' "

Being a co-chair of the big Young Collectors' party at the antiques show—the bash proper takes place on January 21st—is one of the essential duties of a rising young society lady: recent organizers include such burgeoning Brooke Astors as Marina Rust and Brooke de Ocampo. This was Lindemann's first time, and she seemed to be acquitting herself well. As barefoot waiters passed around plates of lamb kebab and stuffed grape leaves and green cocktails made with vodka and mint, Lindemann explained that the Moroccan theme came about not because of any similar element in the Winter Antiques Show but because any other theme would clash horribly with her apartment, which she shares with her fiancé, Roger Barnett, a businessman. Their dining room is decorated with a wraparound trompe-l'oeil mural that gives a diner the sense of sitting inside a desert tent, complete with a view of a souk and camel trains, though without the dust. "I am a little bit fixated on camels," Lindemann said. "Do you want to hear the embarrassing part? I have never been to Morocco. But now I feel I don't need to."

Lindemann said that her taste in antiques was "traditional, with a twist," but it was hard to see how traditional or twisted her furniture was because of the crush of besuited men in fezzes and young women looking like escapees from the white-slave trade, all blond hair and sequinned head scarves. Clearly visible on the living-room wall, though, was a Chagall painting of a bridal couple on a horse, an early wedding gift from Barnett.

Barnett, who wore a wine-colored velvet jacket from Gucci and a wine-colored fez, smiled with a genial reserve as the evening's featured entertainment, a belly dancer wearing what looked like a rhinestone-studded Wonderbra and a black veil, started undulating emphatically in front of him. Other guests were more visibly moved, including Arie Kopelman, the president of Chanel and the chairman of the Winter Antiques Show Committee, who, when the dancer wrapped her veil, turbanlike, around his head and wiggled in front of him, gamely wiggled back. "I must say, it is pretty exciting to see it in the flesh," Kopelman said afterward. "When I say it is the Moroccan answer to Viagra, I am not kidding."

As the belly dancer made her circuit around the scrupulously decorated living room, Lindemann explained that her own, less revealing, outfit was "a bit of a fib." The pale-blue brocade jacket and velvet pants she wore were, she said, "by Balmain, from Paris. Not quite straight from Marrakech. It is the couture version of my theme."

It was pointed out that the whole evening might be called a couture version of her theme. "Thank you!" she said, beaming. She paused thoughtfully. "I will take that as a compliment," she added, beaming still.

—REBECCA MEAD

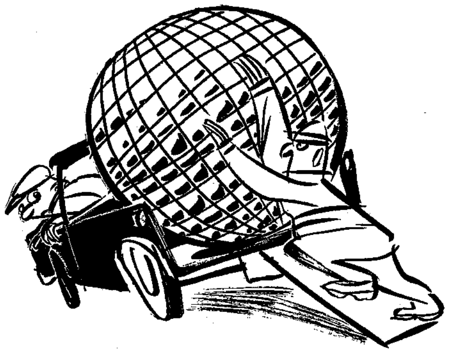
THE BOARDS

The disco ball takes center stage at "Cabaret."

Of all the places that might be found lacking in the mirrored-disco-ball department, Studio 54 would certainly seem to be an unlikely candidate. Yet until recently the bastion of seventies decadence had been bereft of its silvery crown jewel, which hasn't been seen since its last party, in 1986. When the Broadway production of "Cabaret" moved from the Henry Miller Theatre into the former night club in November, the show's producers installed a new ball, this time in the service of thirties decadence.

Mounting a production of "Cabaret" doesn't require a mirrored ball. But when the show began rehearsals at the Henry Miller, last year, the cast found one hanging from the ceiling—the Miller, too, had done time as a disco, first as Xenon, and more recently as Club Expo—and soon the ball was written into the script.

When it came time to locate a mirrored ball for "Cabaret" 's new venue, Sydney Davolos, the show's general manager, found it necessary to brush up on some disco esoterica; she learned that the standard diameter of a mirrored ball is five feet. Davolos wanted a replica of the Miller's ball, which has a nearly six-foot diameter. She telephoned design shops all over the country and was told repeatedly, "You can rent my five-footer."



The other day, in her backstage office, Davolos explained that a bigger ball means bigger pieces of mirror, which mean bigger spots of reflected light. "Light size is very important," she said. In "Cabaret," the slowly spinning mirrored ball bathes the theatre in pools of white light, which look to be the size of tennis balls. Smaller spots, by contrast, might resemble a flurry of Ping-Pong balls. "We wanted disco—but not *disco*," Davolos said.

The widespread aversion to six-foot

mirrored balls, Davolos learned, stems from the difficulty of attaching standard, four-by-four-inch pieces of mirror around the curvature of a hundred-and-thirteen-square-foot sphere. The elegant mathematics that obtain with a five-foot ball just don't work when you add another foot. Eventually, Davolos found Neil Shubert, who co-owns Capital Scenic, in Garnerville, New York. He agreed to make a six-foot ball out of polystyrene foam.

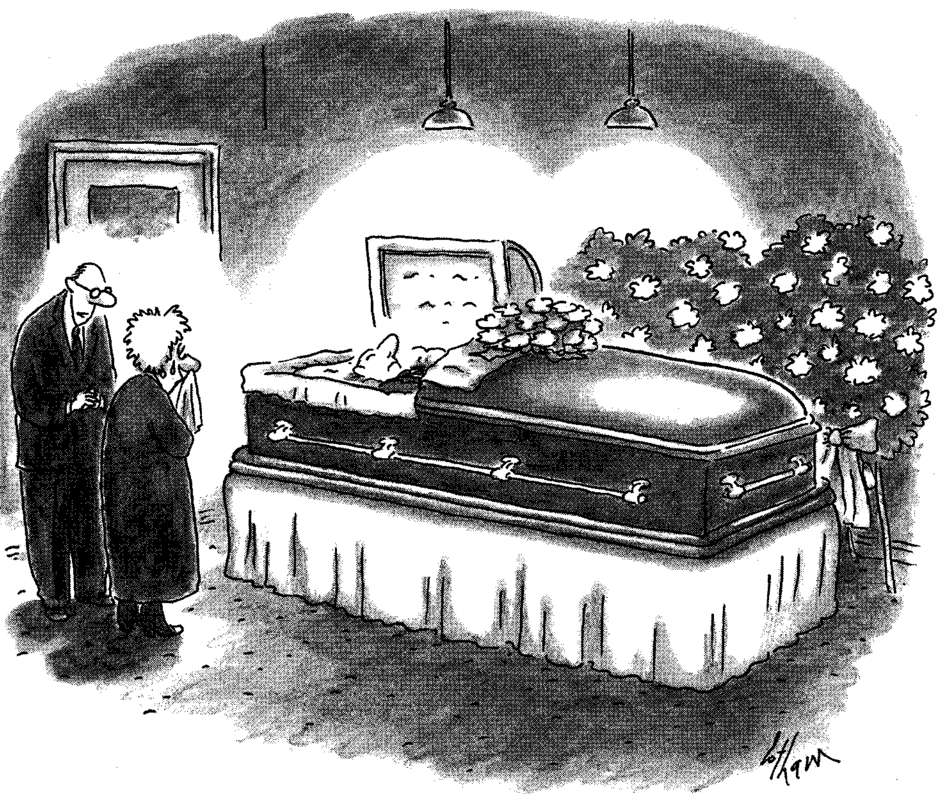
According to Shubert, constructing a mirrored disco ball isn't all that hard. You could probably even make one at home. Here's what you'd need:

- Nine hundred and thirty-one four-by-four-inch Plexiglas mirror squares.
- Mirrormastik (mirror glue; you can find it, Shubert said, at "your run-of-the-mill mirror store").
- Thirty-six extruded foam circles of varying sizes which stack up to form a sphere.

A word of warning: once assembled, a six-foot mirrored disco ball won't fit through the average door. Shubert had to shave an inch from each side of his workshop's doorjamb. Then he wrapped the ball in old blankets, stowed it in the back of a truck, and drove it into Manhattan.

Shubert's seventy-five-hundred-dollar, two-hundred-and-sixty-six-pound finished product now hangs from Studio 54's domed ceiling. Unlike the Miller Theatre's ball, which last year came crashing down onto the stage during a technical rehearsal, the new one is securely attached. "Are you kidding me?" Davolos said. "It has two engineers' worth of rigging! It's going nowhere!"

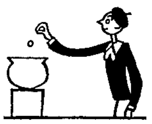
—NICOLE LA PORTE



"We never say 'death'—we prefer 'deadness.'"

PENNY SAVED DEPT.

A nest egg grows in Washington.



WHEN Washington politicians speak of "loose change," they're generally talking about a couple of million dollars here or there—the sort of paltry sums that vanish into an omnibus-spending resolution like nickels lost under the sofa cushions. And so in a town where a six-figure donation might buy only a few minutes of face time with an important senator, what's the value of a copper penny?

At a bank in Georgetown one recent afternoon, a young man dressed like a college student came in carrying a dainty wicker basket full of rolled coins. He approached a bank employee and, in a voice barely above a whisper, asked where he could make a cash deposit. The employee pointed to one of the teller windows; strangely, the man hurried outside.

A minute later, he was back—this time accompanied by two brawny gentlemen in suits and a tiny woman dressed in black. Each of the well-tailored megaliths, like the college kid, wore a small earpiece attached to a transparent wire that coiled up out of his jacket. Once they'd secured the area by briskly shepherding other patrons out of her path, the diminutive woman brought her wicker basket up to the counter and chatted amiably with a clerk while he made out her deposit slip.

"Is that—?" a bystander asked one of the bodyguards.

"Not allowed to say."

As soon as the woman and her escorts had left, the bystander positioned himself so that he would be next in line for her teller. To buy a little time, he asked for a record of all recent activity in both his checking and his savings accounts, and, while the clerk was occupied, he visually tallied up the stacked coinage sitting on the counter. The wicker basket had contained a roll of quarters, two rolls of dimes, two rolls of nickels—and twenty-eight rolls of pennies. Total cash value: thirty-eight dollars.

A quarter will still buy you the Washington *Post*, and dimes and nickels can be used in vending machines, but who wants to weigh down pocket or purse with pennies—mere ballast that hardly qualifies as legal tender? Who among us has the kind of free time necessary to sort and count loose change and carefully stuff it into paper sheaths? Apparently, as the bystander in the bank learned, the ranks of such thrifty, habitually underemployed citizens include the U. S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.

—JONAH BLANK

ANNALS OF ESPIONAGE

THE TRAITOR

The case against Jonathan Pollard.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

IN the last decade, Jonathan Pollard, the American Navy employee who spied for Israel in the mid-nineteen-eighties and is now serving a life sentence, has become a cause célèbre in Israel and among Jewish groups in the United States. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, a consortium of fifty-five groups, has publicly called for Pollard's release, arguing, in essence, that his crimes did not amount to high treason against the United States, because Israel was then and remains a close ally. Many of the leading religious organizations have also called for an end to Pollard's imprisonment, among them the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Orthodox Union.

Pollard himself, now forty-four, has never denied that he turned over a great deal of classified material to the Israelis, but he maintains that his sole motive was to protect Israeli security. "From the start of this affair, I never intended or agreed to spy against the United States," he told United States District Court Judge Aubrey Robinson, Jr., in a memorandum submitted before his sentencing, in 1986. His goal, he said, was "to provide such information on the Arab powers and the Soviets that would permit the Israelis to avoid a repetition of the Yom Kippur War," in 1973, when an attack by Egypt and Syria took Israel by surprise. "At no time did I ever compromise the names of any U.S. agents operating overseas, nor did I ever reveal any U.S. ciphers, codes, encipherment devices, classified military technology, the disposition and orders of U.S. forces . . . or communications security procedures," Pollard added. "I never thought for a second that Israel's gain would necessarily result in America's loss. How could it?"

Pollard's defenders use the same arguments today. In a recent op-ed article in the Washington *Post*, the Harvard Law School professor Alan M. Dershowitz, who served as Pollard's lawyer in the early nineteen-nineties, and three co-authors called for President Clinton to correct what they depicted as "this long-standing miscarriage of justice" in the Pollard case. There was nothing in Pollard's indictment, they added, to suggest that he had "compromised the nation's intelligence-gathering capabilities" or "betrayed worldwide intelligence data."

In Israel, Pollard's release was initially championed by the right, but it has evolved into a mainstream political issue. Early in the Clinton Administration, Yitzhak Rabin, the late Israeli Prime Minister, personally urged the President on at least two occasions to grant clemency. Both times, Clinton reviewed the evidence against Pollard and decided not to take action. But last October, at a crucial moment in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations at the Wye River Conference Centers, in Maryland, he did tentatively agree to release Pollard, or so the Israeli government claimed. When the President's acquiescence became publicly known, the American intelligence community responded immediately, with unequivocal anger. According to the *Times*, George J. Tenet, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, warned the President that he would be forced to resign from the agency if Pollard were to be released. Clinton then told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Pollard's release would not be imminent, and ordered a formal review of the case.

The President's willingness to consider clemency for Pollard so upset the intelligence community that its leaders took an unusual step: they began to go public. In early December, four retired admirals who had served as director of Naval Intelligence circulated an article, eventually published in the Washington *Post*, in which they argued that Pollard's release would be "irresponsible" and a victory for what they depicted as a "clever public relations campaign." Since then, sensitive details about the secrets Pollard gave away have been made public by CBS and NBC.

In the course of my own interviews for this account, the officials who knew

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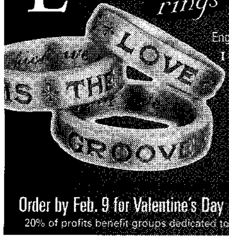

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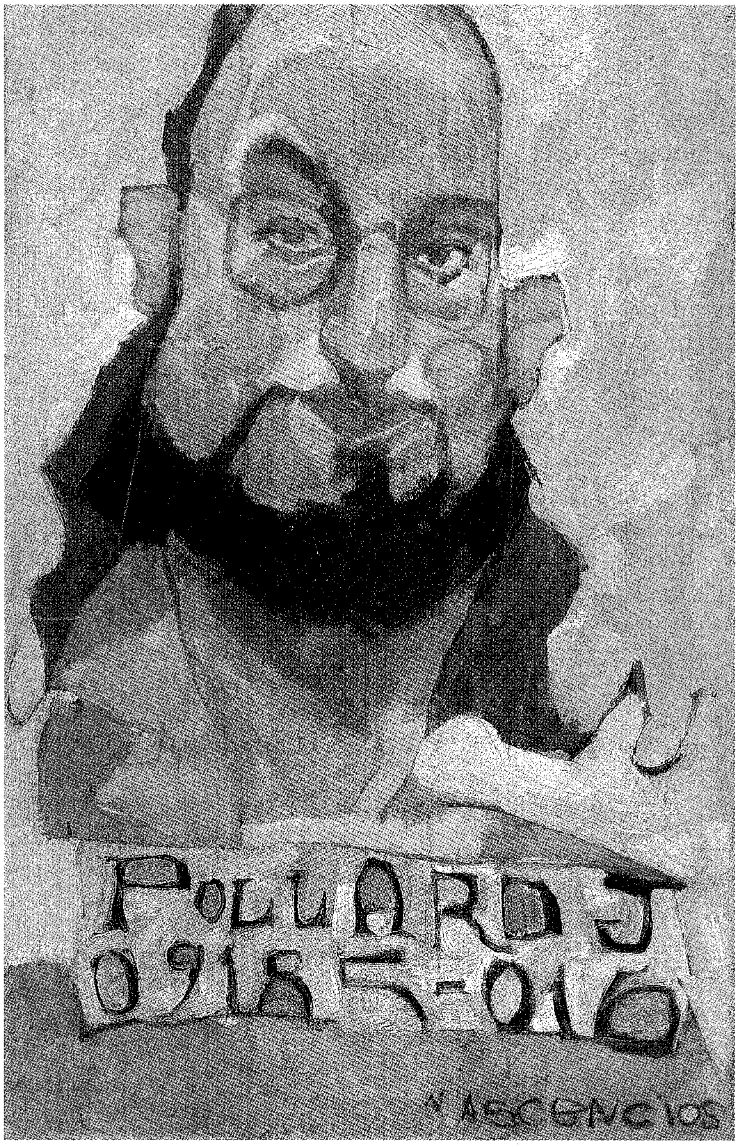
the most about Jonathan Pollard made it clear that they were talking because they no longer had confidence that President Clinton would do what they believed was the right thing—keep Pollard locked up. Pollard, these officials told me, had done far more damage to American national security than was ever made known to the public; for example, he betrayed elements of four major American intelligence systems. In their eyes, there is no distinction between betraying secrets to an enemy, such as the Soviet Union, and betraying secrets to an ally. Officials are loath to talk publicly about it, but spying on allies is a fact of life: the United States invests billions annually to monitor the communications of its friends. Many American embassies around the world contain a clandestine intercept facility that targets diplomatic communications. The goal is not only to know the military and diplomatic plans of our friends but also to learn what intelligence they may be receiving and with whom they share information. "If a friendly state has friends that we don't see as friends," one senior official explained, sensitive intelligence that it should not possess—such as that supplied by Pollard—"can spread to others." Many officials said they were convinced that information Pollard sold to the Israelis had ultimately wound up in the hands of the Soviet Union.



"Nobody can believe that any President would have the gall to release this kind of spy," a Justice Department official says.

N. ASCENCIOS

JONATHAN JAY POLLARD was born in 1954 and grew up as the youngest of three children in South Bend, Indiana; his father, Dr. Morris Pollard, was an award-winning microbiologist who taught at Notre Dame. The young boy did not fit in well in South Bend, and members of his family have described his years in public school there as hellish: he made constant complaints of being picked on and, in high school, beaten up, because he was Jewish. One of the boy's happiest times, the family told journalists after his arrest, came when, at the age of sixteen, he attended a summer camp for gifted children in Israel. He talked then of serving in the Israeli Army, but instead he finished high school and went on to Stanford University. His Stanford classmates later recalled that he was full of stories about his ties to Israeli intelligence and the Israeli Army. He also was said to have been a heavy drug and alcohol user. He graduated in 1976, and in the next three years he attended several graduate schools without getting a degree. He applied for a job with the C.I.A. but was turned down when the agency concluded, after a lie-detector test and other investigations, that he was "a blabbermouth," as one official put it, and had misrepresented his drug use. Pollard then tried for a job with the Navy, and obtained a civilian position as a research analyst in the Field Operational Intelligence Office, in Suitland, Maryland. The job required high-level security clearances, and the Navy, which knew nothing about the C.I.A.'s assessment, eventually gave them to Pollard. His initial assignments dealt with the study of surface-ships systems in non-Communist countries, and, according to Pollard's superiors, his analytical work was excellent. While at Suitland, however, he repeatedly told colleagues far-fetched stories about ties he had with Mossad, the Israeli foreign-intelligence agency, and about his work as an operative in the Middle East.

Pollard's bragging and storytelling didn't prevent his immediate supervisors from recognizing his competence as an analyst. He was given many opportunities for promotion, but at least one of them he sabotaged. In the early nineteen-eighties, Lieutenant Commander David G. Muller, Jr., who ran an analytical section at Suitland, had an opening on his staff and summoned Pollard for an interview. "I had respect for him," Muller recalled recently. "He knew a lot about Navy hardware and a lot about the Middle East." An early-Monday-morning interview was set up. "Jay blew in the first thing Monday," Muller recounted. "He looked as if he hadn't slept or shaved. He proceeded to tell me that on Friday evening his then fiancée, Anne Henderson, had been kidnapped by I.R.A. operatives in Washington, and he'd spent the weekend chasing the kidnappers." Pollard said that he had managed to rescue his fiancée "only in the wee hours of Monday morning"—just before his appointment. Of course, Pollard did not get the job, Muller said, but he still wishes that he had warned others. "I ought to have gone to the security people," Muller, who is retired, told me, "and said, 'Hey, this guy's a wacko.'"

A career American intelligence officer who has been actively involved for years in assessing the damage caused by Pollard told me that Pollard had been desperately broke during this period: "He had credit-card debts, loan debts, debts on rent, furniture, cars." He was also borrowing heavily from his colleagues, in part to forestall possible garnishment of his wages—an action that could lead to loss of his top-secret clearances. Despite his chronic financial problems, the intelligence officer said, Pollard was constantly spending money on meals in expensive restaurants, on drugs, and on huge bar bills.

In late 1983, shortly after the terrorist bombing of a Marine barracks in Beirut, the Navy set up a high-powered Anti-Terrorist Alert Center at Suitland, and in June, 1984, Pollard was assigned to that unit's Threat Analysis Division. He had access there to the most up-to-date intelligence in the American government. By that summer, however, he had been recruited by Israeli intelligence. He was arrested a year and a half later, in November of 1985.

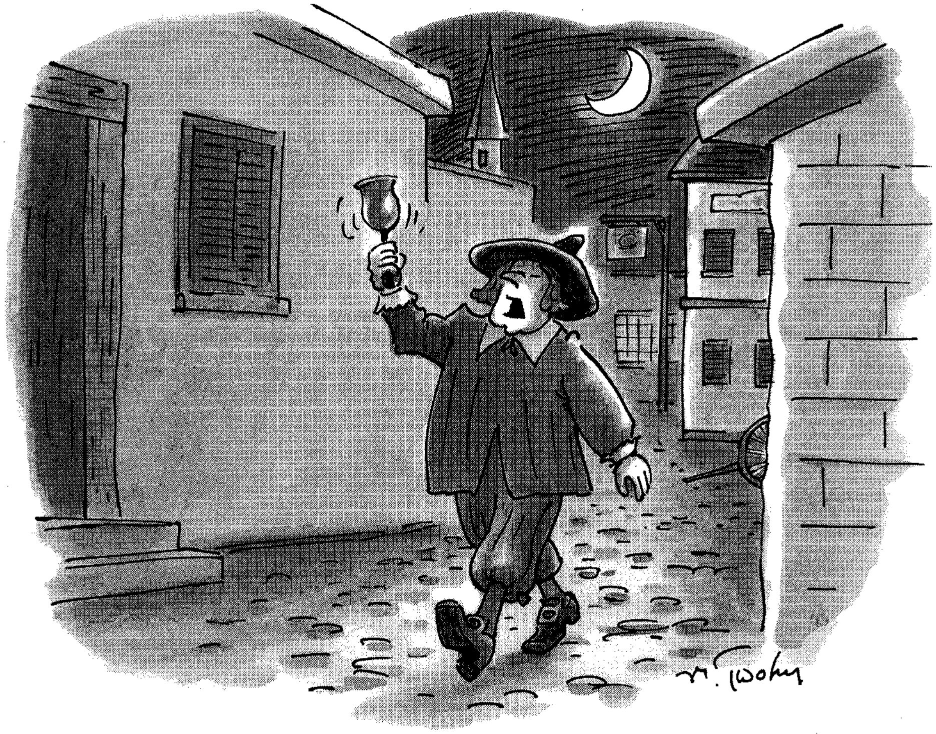
Pollard was paid well by the Israelis: he received a salary that eventually reached twenty-five hundred dollars a month, and tens of thousands of dollars in cash disbursements for hotels, meals, and even jewelry. In his pre-sentencing statement to Judge Robinson, Pollard depicted the money as a benefit that was forced on him. "I did accept money for my services," he acknowledged, but only "as a reflection of how well I was doing my job." He went on to assert that he had later told his controller, Rafi Eitan, a longtime spy who at the time headed a scientific-intelligence unit in Israel, that "I not only intended to repay all the money I'd received but, also, was going to establish a chair at the Israeli General Staff's Intelligence Training Center outside Tel Aviv."

Charles S. Leeper, the assistant United States attorney who prosecuted Pollard, challenged his statement that money had not motivated him. In a publicly filed sentencing memorandum, Leeper said that Pollard was known to have received fifty thousand dollars in cash from his Israeli handlers and to have been told that thirty thousand more would be deposited annually in a foreign bank account. Pollard had made a commitment to spy for at least ten years, the memorandum alleged, and "stood to receive an additional five hundred and forty thousand dollars ($540,000) over the expected life of the conspiracy."

There was no such public specificity, however, when it came to the top-secret materials that Pollard had passed on to Israel. In mid-1986, he elected to plea-bargain rather than face a trial. The government agreed with alacrity: no state secrets would have to be revealed, especially about the extent of Israeli espionage. After the plea bargain, the Justice Department supplied the court with a classified sworn declaration signed by Caspar W. Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, which detailed, by category, some of the intelligence systems that had been compromised. Judge Robinson, for his part, said nothing in public about the scope of the materials involved in the case, and merely noted at the end of a lengthy sentencing hearing, in March, 1987, that he had "read all of the material once, twice, thrice, if you will." He then sentenced Pollard to life in prison. Pollard's wife, Anne (they had married in 1985), who had been his accomplice, was convicted of unauthorized possession and transmission of classified defense documents and was given a five-year sentence.

Once in jail, Pollard became increasingly fervent in proclaiming his support for Israel. In the Washington *Post* last summer, the journalist Peter Perl wrote that even Pollard's friends saw him as "obsessed with vindication, consumed by the idea that he is a victim of anti-semitism and that Israel can rescue him through diplomatic and political pressure." Pollard has also turned increasingly to Orthodox Judaism. He divorced his wife after her release from prison, in 1990, and in 1994 proclaimed that, under Jewish law, he had been married in prison to a Toronto schoolteacher named Elaine Zeitz. Esther Pollard, as she is now known, is an indefatigable ally, who passionately believes that her husband was wrongfully accused of harming the United States and was therefore wrongfully imprisoned. "This is the kind of issue I feel very strongly concerns every Jew and every decent, law-abiding citizen," she told an interviewer shortly after the marriage. "The issues are much bigger than Jonathan and myself. . . . Like it or not, we are writing a page of Jewish history."

ESTHER POLLARD and her husband's other supporters are mistaken in believing that Jonathan Pollard caused no significant damage to American national security. Furthermore, according to senior members of the American intelligence community, Pollard's argument that he acted solely from idealistic motives and provided Israel only with those documents which were needed for its defense was a sham designed to mask the fact that he was driven to spy by his chronic need for money.



"It's ten o'clock, and seventy-seven per cent of the people think all is well!"

Before Pollard's plea bargain, the government had been preparing a multicount criminal indictment that included—along with espionage, drug, and tax-fraud charges—allegations that before his arrest Pollard had used classified documents in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the governments of South Africa, Argentina, and Taiwan to participate in an arms deal for anti-Communist Afghan rebels who were then being covertly supported by the Reagan Administration. F.B.I. investigators later determined that in the fall of 1985 Pollard had also consulted with three Pakistanis and an Iranian in his efforts to broker arms. (The foreigners were quietly deported within several months of his arrest.)

Had Pollard's case gone to trial, one of the government's major witnesses would have been a journalist named Kurt Lohbeck, who had a checkered past. He had served seven months in prison after being convicted of passing a bad check in New Mexico in 1977, but by 1985 he was under contract to the CBS Evening News. Lohbeck, who now lives in Albuquerque (he received a full pardon from the governor of New Mexico two years ago), acknowledged in a telephone interview that he was prepared to testify, if necessary, about his involvement in Pollard's unsuccessful efforts in 1985 to broker arms sales for the rebels in the Afghan war. At one meeting with a foreign diplomat, Lohbeck said, Pollard posed as a high-level C.I.A. operative. Lohbeck, who was then CBS's main battlefield correspondent in the Afghan war, told me that Pollard had provided him, and thus CBS, with a large number of classified American documents concerning the war. He also told me that Pollard had never discussed Israel with him or indicated any special feelings for the state. "I never heard anything political from Jay," Lohbeck added, "other than that he tried to portray himself as a Reaganite. Not a word about Israel. Jay's sole interest was in making a lot of money."

Lohbeck went on to say that he had also been prepared to testify, if asked, about Pollard's drug use. "Jay used cocaine heavily, and had no compunction about doing it in public. He'd just lay it in lines on the table." In 1985, Lohbeck made similar statements, government officials said, to the F.B.I.

Pollard, told by me of Lohbeck's assertions, sent a response from a jail cell in North Carolina: "My relationship with Lohbeck is extremely complicated. I was never indicted for anything I did with him. Remember that."

THE documents that Pollard turned over to Israel were not focussed exclusively on the *product* of American intelligence—its analytical reports and estimates. They also revealed *how* America was able to learn what it did—a most sensitive area of intelligence defined as "sources and methods." Pollard gave the Israelis vast amounts of data dealing with specific American intelligence systems and how they worked. For example, he betrayed details of an exotic capability that American satellites have of taking off-axis photographs from high in space. While orbiting the earth in one direction, the satellites could photograph areas that were seemingly far out of range. Israeli nuclear-missile sites and the like, which would normally be shielded from American satellites, would thus be left exposed, and could be photographed. "We monitor the Israelis," one intelligence expert told me, "and there's no doubt the Israelis want to prevent us from being able to surveil their country." The data passed along by Pollard included detailed information on the various platforms—in the air, on land, and at sea—used by military components of the National Security Agency to intercept Israeli military, commercial, and diplomatic communications. At the time of Pollard's spying, select groups of American sailors and soldiers trained in Hebrew were stationed at an N.S.A. listening post near Harrogate, England, and at a specially constructed facility inside the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, where they intercepted and translated Israeli signals. Other interceptions came from an unmanned N.S.A. listening post in Cyprus. Pollard's handing over of the data had a clear impact, the expert told me, for "we could see the whole process"—of intelligence collection—"slowing down." It also hindered the United States' ability to recruit foreign agents. Another senior official commented, with bitterness, "The level of penetration would convince any self-respecting human source to look for other kinds of work."

A number of officials strongly suspect that the Israelis repackaged much

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of Pollard's material and provided it to the Soviet Union in exchange for continued Soviet permission for Jews to emigrate to Israel. Other officials go further, and say there was reason to believe that secret information was exchanged for Jews working in highly sensitive positions in the Soviet Union. A significant percentage of Pollard's documents, including some that described the techniques the American Navy used to track Soviet submarines around the world, was of practical importance only to the Soviet Union. One longtime C.I.A. officer who worked as a station chief in the Middle East said he understood that "certain elements in the Israeli military had used it"—Pollard's material—"to trade for people they wanted to get out," including Jewish scientists working in missile technology and on nuclear issues. Pollard's spying came at a time when the Israeli government was publicly committed to the free flow of Jewish émigrés from the Soviet Union. The officials stressed the fact that they had no hard evidence—no "smoking gun," in the form of a document from an Israeli or a Soviet archive—to demonstrate the link between Pollard, Israel, and the Soviet Union, but they also said that the documents that Pollard had been directed by his Israeli handlers to betray led them to no other conclusion.

High-level suspicions about Israeli-Soviet collusion were expressed as early as December, 1985, a month after Pollard's arrest, when William J. Casey, the late C.I.A. director, who was known for his close ties to the Israeli leadership, stunned one of his station chiefs by suddenly complaining about the Israelis breaking the "ground rules." The issue arose when Casey urged increased monitoring of the Israelis during an otherwise routine visit, I was told by the station chief, who is now retired. "He asked if I knew anything about the Pollard case," the station chief recalled, and he said that Casey had added, "For your information, the Israelis used Pollard to obtain our attack plan against the U.S.S.R.—all of it. The coördinates, the firing locations, the sequences. And for guess who? The Soviets." Casey had then explained that the Israelis had traded the Pollard data for Soviet émigrés. "How's that for cheating?" he had asked.

In subsequent interviews, former C.I.A. colleagues of Casey's were unable to advance his categorical assertion significantly. Duane Clarridge, then in charge of clandestine operations in Europe, recalled that the C.I.A. director had told him that the Pollard material "goes beyond just the receipt in Israel of this stuff." But Casey, who had many close ties to the Israeli intelligence community, hadn't told Clarridge how he knew what he knew. Robert Gates, who became deputy C.I.A. director in April, 1986, told me that Casey had never indicated to him that he had specific information about the Pollard material arriving in Moscow. "The notion that the Russians may have gotten some of the stuff has always been a viewpoint," Gates said, but not through the bartering of émigrés. "The only view I heard expressed was that it was through intelligence operations"—the K.G.B.

In any event, there was enough evidence, officials told me, to include a statement about the possible flow of intelligence to the Soviet Union in Defense Secretary Weinberger's top-secret declaration that was presented to the court before Pollard's sentencing. There was little doubt, I learned from an official who was directly involved, that Soviet intelligence had access to the most secret information in Israel. "The question," the official said, "was whether we could prove it was Pollard's material that went over the aqueduct. We couldn't get there, so we suggested" in the Weinberger affidavit that the possibility existed. Caution was necessary, the official added, for "fear that the other side would say that 'these people are seeing spies under the bed.' "

The Justice Department further informed Judge Robinson, in a publicly filed memorandum, that "numerous" analyses of Soviet missile systems had been sold by Pollard to Israel, and that those documents included "information from human sources whose identity could be inferred by a reasonably competent intelligence analyst. Moreover, the identity of the authors of these classified publications" was clearly marked.

A retired Navy admiral who was directly involved in the Pollard investigation told me, "There is no question that the Russians got a lot of the Pollard stuff. The only question is how did it get there?" The admiral, like Robert Gates, had an alternative explanation. He pointed out that Israel would always play a special role in American national-security affairs. "We give them truckloads of stuff in the normal course of our official relations," the admiral said. "And they use it very effectively. They do things worth doing, and they will go places where we will not go, and do what we do not dare to do." Nevertheless, he said, it was understood that the Soviet intelligence services had long since penetrated Israel. (One important Soviet spy, Shabtai Kalmanovitch, whose job at one point was to ease the resettlement of Russian emigrants in Israel, was arrested in 1987.) It was reasonably assumed in the aftermath of Pollard, the admiral added, that Soviet spies inside Israel had been used to funnel

THE PERCH

Perch on their water perch hung in the clear Bann River
Near the clay bank in alder dapple and waver,

Perch they called "grunts," little flood-slubs, runty and ready,
I saw and I see in the river's glorified body

That is passable through, but they're bluntly holding the pass,
Under the water-roof, over the bottom, adoze

On the current, against it, all muscle and slur
In the finland of perch, the fenland of alder, on air

That is water, on carpets of Bann stream, on hold
In the everything flows and steady go of the world.

—Seamus Heaney

some of the Pollard material to Moscow.

A full accounting of the materials provided by Pollard to the Israelis has been impossible to obtain: Pollard himself has estimated that the documents would create a stack six feet wide, six feet long, and ten feet high. Rafi Eitan, the Israeli who controlled the operation, and two colleagues of his attached to the Israeli diplomatic delegation—Irit Erb and Joseph Yagur—were named as unindicted co-conspirators by the Justice Department. In the summer of 1984, Eitan brought in Colonel Aviem Sella, an Air Force hero, who led Israel's dramatic and successful 1981 bombing raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. (Sella was eventually indicted, in absentia, on three counts of espionage.) Eitan's decision to order Sella into the case is considered by many Americans to have been a brilliant stroke: the Israeli war hero was met with starry eyes by Pollard, a chronic wannabe. Yagur, Erb, and Sella were in Washington when Pollard was first seized by the F.B.I., in November, 1985, but they quickly left the country, never to return. During one period, Pollard had been handing over documents to them almost weekly, and they had been forced to rent an apartment in northwest Washington, where they installed a high-speed photocopying machine. "Safe houses and special Xeroxes?" an American career intelligence officer said, despairingly, concerning the Pollard operation. "This was not the first guy they'd recruited." In the years following Pollard's arrest and confession, the Israeli government chose not to coöperate fully with the F.B.I. and Justice Department investigation, and only a token number of the Pollard documents have been returned. It was not until last May that the Israeli government even acknowledged that Pollard had been its operative.

In fact, it is widely believed that Pollard was not the only one in the American government spying for Israel. During his year and a half of spying, his Israeli handlers requested specific documents, which were identified only by top-secret control numbers. After much internal assessment, the government's intelligence experts concluded that it was "highly unlikely," in the words of a Justice Department official, that any of the other American spies of the era would have had access to the specific control numbers. "There is only one conclusion," the expert told me. The Israelis "got the numbers from somebody else in the U.S. government."

The men and women of the National Security Agency live in a world of chaotic bleeps, buzzes, and whistles, and talk to each other about frequencies, spectrums, modulation, and bandwidth—the stuff of Tom Clancy novels. They often deal with signals intelligence, or SIGINT, and their world is kept in order by an in-house manual known as the RASIN, an acronym for radio-signal notations. The manual, which is classified "top-secret Umbra," fills ten volumes, is constantly updated, and lists the physical parameters of every known signal. Pollard took it all. "It's the Bible," one former communications-intelligence officer told me. "It tells how we collect signals anywhere in the world." The site, frequency, and significant features of Israeli communications—those that were known and targeted by the N.S.A.—were in the RASIN; so were all the known communications links used by the Soviet Union.

The loss of the RASIN was especially embarrassing to the Navy, I was told by the retired admiral, because the copy that Pollard photocopied belonged to the Office of Naval Intelligence. "He went into our library, found we had an out-of-date version, requested a new one, and passed it on," the officer said. "I was surprised we even had it."

The RASIN theft was one of the specifics cited in Defense Secretary Weinberger's still secret declaration to the court before Pollard's sentencing hearing. In fact, the hearing's most dramatic moment came when Pollard's attorney, Richard A. Hibey, readily acknowledged his client's guilt but argued that the extent of the damage to American national security did not call for the imposition of a maximum sentence. "I would ask you to think about the Secretary of Defense's affidavit, as it related to only one thing," Judge Robinson interjected, "with reference to one particular category of publication, and I fail to see how you can make that argument." He invited Hibey to approach the bench, along with the Justice Department attorneys, and the group spent a few moments reviewing what government officials told me was Weinberger's account of the importance of the RASIN. One Justice Department official, recalling those moments with obvious pleasure, said that the RASIN was the ninth item on the Weinberger damage-assessment list. After the bench conference, Hibey made no further attempt to minimize the national-security damage caused by its theft. (Citing national security, Hibey refused to discuss the case for this article.)

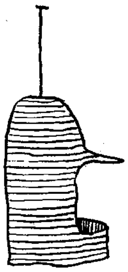
The ten volumes of the RASIN were available on a need-to-know basis inside the N.S.A. "I've never seen the monster," a former senior watch officer at an N.S.A. intercept site in Europe told me, but added that he did supervise people who constantly used it, and he described its function in easy-to-understand terms: "It is a complete catalogue of what the United States was listening to, or could listen to—information referred to in the N.S.A. as 'parametric data.' It tells you everything you want to know about a particular signal—when it was first detected and where, whom it was first used by, what kind of entity, frequency, wavelength, or band length it has. When you've copied a signal and don't know what it is, the RASIN manual gives you a description."

A senior intelligence official who consults regularly with the N.S.A. on technical matters subsequently told me that another issue involved geometry. The RASIN, he explained, had been focussed in particular on the Soviet Union and its thousands of high-frequency, or shortwave, communications, which had enabled Russian military units at either end of the huge land mass to communicate with each other. Those signals "bounced" off the ionosphere and were often best intercepted thousands of miles from their point of origin. If, as many in the American intelligence community suspected, the Soviet communications experts had been able to learn which of their signals were being monitored, and where, they could relocate the signal and force the N.S.A. to invest man-hours and money to try to recapture it. Or, more likely, the Soviets could continue to communicate in a normal fashion but relay false and misleading information.

Pollard's betrayal of the RASIN put the N.S.A. in the position of having to question or reëvaluate all of its intelligence collecting. "We aren't perfect," the career intelligence officer explained to me. "We've got holes in our coverage, and this”—the loss of the RASIN—“tells where the biases and the weaknesses are. It’s how we get the job done, and how we will get the job done.”

“What a wonderful insight into how we think, and exactly how we’re exploiting Soviet communications!” the retired admiral exclaimed. “It’s a how-to-do-it book—the fireside cookbook of cryptology. Not only the analyses but the facts of how we derived our analyses. Whatever recipe you want.”

Pollard, asked about the specific programs he compromised, told me, “As far as SIGINT information is concerned, the government has consistently lied in its public version of what I gave the Israelis.”



In the mid-nineteen-eighties, the daily report from the Navy’s Sixth Fleet Ocean Surveillance Information Facility (FOSIF) in Rota, Spain, was one of America’s Cold War staples. A top-secret document filed every morning at 0800 Zulu time (Greenwich Mean Time), it reported all that had gone on in the Middle East during the previous twenty-four hours, as recorded by the N.S.A.’s most sophisticated monitoring devices. The reports were renowned inside Navy commands for their sophistication and their reliability; they were based, as the senior managers understood it, on data supplied both by intelligence agents throughout the Middle East and by the most advanced technical means of intercepting Soviet military communications. The Navy’s intelligence facility at Rota shared space with a huge N.S.A. intercept station, occupied by more than seven hundred linguists and cryptographers, which was responsible for monitoring and decoding military and diplomatic communications all across North Africa. Many at Rota spent hundreds of hours a month listening while locked in top-secret compartments aboard American ships, aircraft, and submarines operating in the Mediterranean.

The Navy’s primary targets were the ships, the aircraft, and, most important, the nuclear-armed submarines of the Soviet Union on patrol in the Mediterranean. Those submarines, whose nuclear missiles were aimed at United States forces, were constantly being tracked; they were to be targeted and destroyed within hours if war broke out.

Pollard’s American interrogators eventually concluded that in his year and a half of spying he had provided the Israelis with more than a year’s worth of the daily FOSIF reports from Rota. Pollard himself told the Americans that at one point in 1985 the Israelis had nagged him when he missed several days of work because of illness and had failed to deliver the FOSIF reports for those days. One of his handlers, Joseph Yagur, had complained twice about the missed messages and had asked him to find a way to retrieve them. Pollard told his American interrogators that he had never missed again.

The career intelligence officer who helped to assess the Pollard damage has come to view Pollard as a serial spy, the Ted Bundy of the intelligence world. “Pollard gave them every message for a whole year,” the officer told me recently, referring to the Israelis. “They could analyze it”—the intelligence—“message by message, and correlate it. They could not only piece together our sources and methods but also learn how we think, and how we approach a problem. All of a sudden, there is no mystery. These are the things we can’t change. You got this, and you got us by the balls.” In other words, the Rota reports, when carefully studied, gave the Israelis “a road map on how to circumvent” the various American collection methods and shield an ongoing military operation. The reports provide guidance on “how to keep us asleep, thinking all is working well,” he added. “They tell the Israelis how to raid Tunisia without tipping off American intelligence in advance. That is damage that is persistent and severe.”

Not every document handed over by Pollard dealt with signals intelligence. DIAL-COINS is the acronym for the Defense Intelligence Agency’s Community On-Line Intelligence System, which was one of the government’s first computerized information-retrieval-network systems. The system, which was comparatively primitive in the mid-nineteen-eighties—it used an 8088 operating chip and thermafax paper—could not be accessed by specific issues or key words but spewed out vast amounts of networked intelligence data by time frame.

Nevertheless, DIAL-COINS contained all the intelligence reports filed by Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine attachés in Israel and elsewhere in the Middle East. One official who had been involved with it told me recently, “It was full of great stuff, particularly in HUMINT”—human intelligence. Many Americans who went to the Middle East for business or political reasons agreed, as loyal citizens, to be debriefed by American defense attachés after their visits. They were promised anonymity—many had close friends inside Israel and the nearby Arab states who would be distressed by their collaboration—and the reports were classified. “It’s who’s talking to whom,” the officer said. “Like handing you the address book of the spooks for a year.”

Government investigators discovered that one of the system’s heaviest users in 1984 and 1985 was Jonathan Pollard. He had all the necessary clearances and necessary credentials to gain access to the classified Pentagon library; he also understood that librarians, even in secret libraries, are always eager to help, and in one instance he relied on the library security guards. With some chagrin, officials involved in the Pollard investigation recounted that Pollard had once collected so much data that he needed a handcart to move the papers to his car, in a nearby parking lot, and the security guards held the doors for him.

Pollard also provided the Israelis with what is perhaps the most important day-to-day information in signals intelligence: the National SIGINT Requirements List, which is essentially a compendium of the tasks, and the priority of those tasks, given to various N.S.A. collection units around the world. Before a bombing mission, for example, a United States satellite might be redeployed, at enormous financial cost, to provide instantaneous electronic coverage of the target area. In addition, N.S.A. field stations would be ordered to begin especially intensive monitoring of various military units in the target nation. Special N.S.A. coverage would also be ordered before an American covert military unit, such as the Army’s Delta Force or a Navy Seal team, was inserted into hostile territory or hostile waters. Sometimes the N.S.A.’s requests were less comprehensive: a European or Middle Eastern business suspected of selling chemical arms to a potential adversary might be placed on the N.S.A. “watch list” and its faxes, telexes, and other communications carefully monitored. The Requirements List is "like a giant to-do list," a former N.S.A. operative told me. "If a customer"—someone in the intelligence community—"asked for specific coverage, it would be on a list that is updated daily." That is, the target of the coverage would be known.

"If we're going to bomb Iraq, we will shift the system," a senior specialist subsequently told me. "It's a tipoff where the American emphasis is going to be." With the List, the specialist added, the Israelis "could see us move our collection systems" prior to military action, and eventually come to understand how the United States Armed Forces "change our emphasis." In other words, he added, Israel "could make our intelligence system the prime target" and hide whatever was deemed necessary. "The damage goes past Jay's arrest," the specialist said, "and could extend up to today." Israel made dramatic use of the Pollard material on October 1, 1985, seven weeks before his arrest, when its Air Force bombed the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunisia, killing at least sixty-seven people. The United States, which was surprised by the operation, eventually concluded that the Israeli planners had synergistically combined the day-to-day insights of the SIGINT Requirements List with the strategic intelligence of the FOSIF reports and other data that Pollard provided to completely outwit our government's huge collection apparatus in the Middle East. Even Pollard himself, the senior official told me, "had no idea what he gave away."

THE results of President Clinton's requested review of the Pollard case by officials in the intelligence community and other interested parties were to be presented to the White House by January 11th. A former Justice Department official told me, "Nobody can believe that any President would have the gall to release this kind of spy." But as the report was being prepared the nature of the questions that the White House was referring to the Justice Department convinced some intelligence officials that Clinton was considering a compromise, such as commuting Pollard's life sentence to twenty-five years in prison. The queries about commutation were coming not from Roger Adams, the President's pardon attorney, but from Charles F. C. Ruff, the White House counsel. "Pollard would get half a loaf," one distraught career intelligence official told me. The deal believed to be under consideration would provide for his release, with time off for good behavior, in the summer of 2002. The solution had a certain "political beauty," the official added—in the eyes of the White House. "Pollard doesn't get out right away, and the issue doesn't cause any trouble. And getting the United States to bend would be a serious victory for Israel."

A senior intelligence official whose agency was involved in preparing the report for the White House told me, somewhat facetiously, that he would drop all objections to Pollard's immediate release if the Israeli government would answer two questions: "First, give us a list of what you've got, and, second, tell us what you did with it." Such answers are unlikely to be forthcoming. The Israeli government has acknowledged that Pollard was indeed spying on its behalf but has refused—despite constant entreaties—to provide the United States with a complete list of the documents that were turned over to it.

Some members of the intelligence community view themselves today as waging a dramatic holding action against a President who they believe is eager to split the difference with the Israelis on Pollard's fate. They see Bill Clinton as a facilitator who would not hesitate to trade Pollard to the Israelis if he thought that would push Israel into a peace settlement and result in a foreign-policy success. The officials emphasize that they support Clinton's efforts to resolve the Middle East crisis but do not think it is appropriate to use Pollard as a bargaining chip. Adding to their dismay, some officials made clear, is the fact that Clinton himself, having studied the case years ago, when he was considering Yitzhak Rabin's request for clemency, knows as much as anyone in the United States government about the significance of Pollard's treachery. One informed official described a private moment at the Wye peace summit when George Tenet, the C.I.A. director, warned the President that Pollard's release would enrage and demoralize the intelligence community. "What he got back," the official told me, "was 'Nah, don't worry about it. It'll blow over.' " ♦

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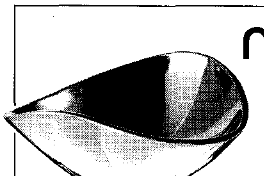

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What makes Governor Pataki so popular?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

IN Albany, January is the season for speechifying. At the beginning of the month, by law, the governor delivers the State of the State address, and at the end of the month, by custom, he delivers a budget address as well. Every four years, there is an Inaugural address, too. This means that by the time Governor George Pataki began his second term, on New Year's Day, he had had plenty of practice as a speechmaker. Yet he never seems to have got the hang of it, or even to have tried.

The theme of this year's Inaugural was "New York Ever Upward." And so all the usual clichés about "the great march of human progress" and "the spirit of hope" and "the indomitable force of the human will" were trotted out, only to plod toward their predictable conclusion like so many cows being herded into an abattoir. "We stand at the edge of a new century, which is spread out before us like an undiscovered land of promise," Pataki told the crowd of state workers and Party stalwarts shivering in the Albany convention center. "We will keep our state moving forward with policies that continue to fuel the passion, unleash the power, and tap the vast reserves of strength, creativity, and determination of New York's greatest resource—the spirit of our people."

Weak public speakers are typically hampered by embarrassment, anxiety, and paralyzing self-knowledge—the mortification that accompanies a healthy sense of one's own inadequacy. But Pataki, by all appearances, suffers from just the reverse. After delivering the hoariest of platitudes, he will pause for emphasis and look up for approval, seeming genuinely pleased with himself and the work of his speechwriters.

Two months ago, Pataki won reëlection by an enviable margin. "Historic" was how the Governor described his win at a post-election news conference, where he was vigorously—and to his evident satisfaction—questioned about his national ambitions. In one of the last solidly Democratic states in the nation, he had beaten his Democratic rival, the New York City Council Speaker, Peter Vallone, by more than twenty points. That same day, the State Attorney General, Dennis Vacco, had gone down to defeat, and so had Senator Alfonse D'Amato, leaving Pataki and his lieutenant governor as the only Republicans in statewide elected office.

"I'd love to say it was brilliant politics," Kieran Mahoney, one of the Governor's chief political consultants, said of Pataki's strong showing, "but it seems in retrospect that it was brilliant governing. George Pataki won reëlection before it began, by governing well." Those outside Pataki's inner circle naturally put a different spin on the event: the Governor, cynics maintained, had got credit for an economic recovery he had virtually nothing to do with; had lucked into a surprisingly weak opponent; and, most important of all, had run an almost shamelessly efficient fund-raising operation. For every dollar that Vallone had to spend on the general election, Pataki had ten. "He outspent his opponent by a massive, massive number," Hank Morris, a Democratic political consultant, declared.

Actually listening to Pataki is no way to choose between these rival accounts, but, like a hanging, it does focus the mind. And at the Inaugural reception, as waitresses passed out chocolates stamped with the state seal and champagne in plastic flutes, it was hard not to feel that one was in the midst of something at once bigger and more banal than the victory party of either a disciplined fiscal conservative or an expert fund-raiser. The Governor's State of the State speech on January 6th, which recycled some of the same mangled metaphors he had used New Year's Day, only served to confirm this impression.

Although Pataki's win was surely a lot less bizarre than that of, for instance, Jesse (The Body) Ventura, it may say just as

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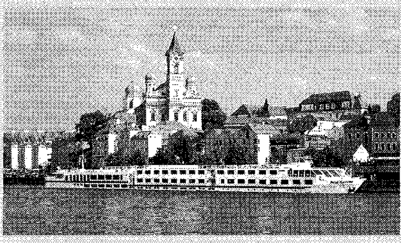

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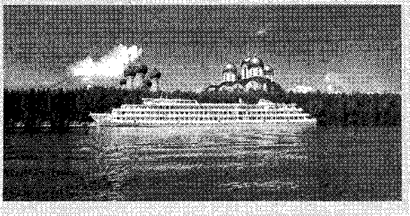

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much about what voters no longer expect, or even desire, in their leaders. Less isn't more, but for now, at least, it is apparently enough. And, viewed in these terms, Pataki's victory is indeed "historic." New York is, after all, the state that elected Teddy Roosevelt, Al Smith, F.D.R., and Nelson Rockefeller, that is home to Madison Avenue, Mario Cuomo, and MTV, yet in November it voted overwhelmingly for a man who could, by way of inspiration, recount the story of State Trooper Keith Bell. One day, Pataki related in his Inaugural speech, Bell was summoned by an elderly couple whose mailbox had been vandalized: "When his shift ended that day he returned to their home—not as a state trooper but as a New Yorker. He took the mailbox to be fixed, then came back and put it back in the ground. A small moment, but one with big meaning."

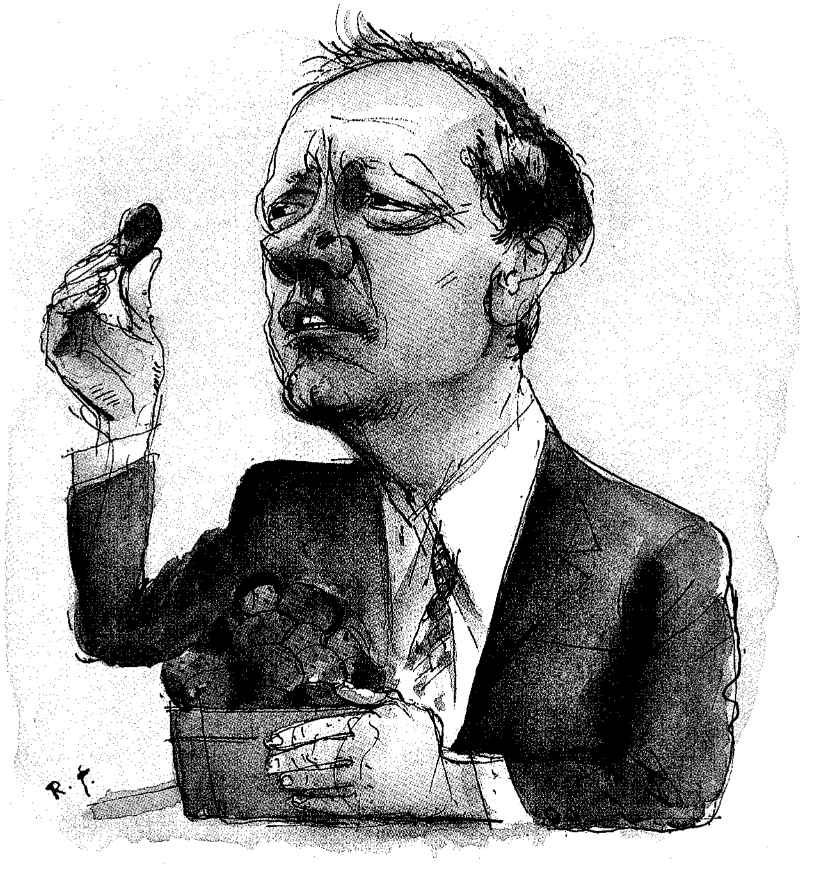
WHEN Pataki first ran for governor, in 1994, he stuck to a few easy-to-remember promises: reinstate the death penalty, cut taxes, and end welfare as "a way of life." Running again, this past fall, he could boast that he had come through on all counts. New York has a spanking-new death row, at its prison in Dannemora, and as of this writing two murderers have been sentenced to die by lethal injection, while fifteen other capital cases are wending their way through the courts. The state's top personal-income-tax rate, which was seven and seven-eighths per cent when Pataki took office, has been reduced to six and eight-tenths per cent. New York's welfare rolls have declined by more than six hundred thousand, and state law now calls for recipients to be cut off after five years. In addition, Pataki has overhauled the state's workers'-compensation system, cut corporate-tax rates, and restricted parole for violent felons. He introduced a long-overdue program of discounted fares on the city's subways and buses, secured passage of a one-and-three-quarter-billion-dollar environmental-bond issue, and, most recently, won agreement from the Legislature to create charter schools.

By all objective measures, these achievements are as extensive as those of his predecessor, Mario Cuomo. Yet they have been accomplished with a fraction of the Sturm und Drang. Thanks in no small part to Cuomo's habit of starting his day around 5 A.M. and making phone calls to aides, legislators, and groggy reporters not long after, the job of New York's governor had come to seem all-consuming. Albany had grown used to an executive who insisted on making all decisions himself, and on agonizing publicly over most of them.

Pataki has declined to be consumed. Citing concerns about uprooting his children, the Governor still makes the hundred-mile commute to the Capitol from his home, in Garrison. Rather than being a dominating presence in Albany, he seems—and often genuinely is—absent. It is altogether foreign to Pataki's style to dwell on what is hard or morally vexing about his job; his inclination, no doubt dispositional as much as philosophical, is to present the choices that face the state as easy and commonsensical. The destiny of New York, which just a few years ago seemed too grave a burden for one person, or even eighteen million, to shoulder, now seems no big deal. To quote Howard Stern's blurb on the back cover of "Pataki: An Autobiography," the Governor "took on the massive responsibility of running New York State and made it look simple."

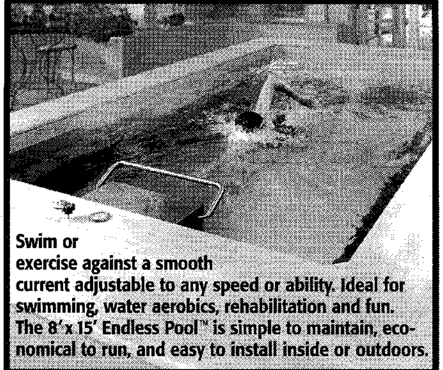
Within the pages of "Pataki," which was published last year, presumably in preparation for a national race, the Governor insistently touts his own unassuming efficiency, often using Cuomo's fabled eloquence as a foil. In one of the volume's many vegetative metaphors, drawn from his childhood on a Peekskill truck farm, Pataki charges Cuomo with the gravest of farm-stand sins: putting his best berries on top. "Any respect I may earn," he writes, "will come not from a speech but from a record.... We all had it, on the farm: work, not glitz; solutions, not blame; results, not talk. It's what had us putting the big berries in the bottom of the basket."

The neat opposition that Pataki postulates between glitz and solutions allows him to justify—and, in a roundabout way, even celebrate—his own obvious shortcomings. Those who can't speak, as it were, do. But an equally good truck-farm metaphor for Pataki's style might be cherry-picking. His successes over the last four years are real, but virtually every cause that he has taken up is the sort a pollster could happily recommend without so much as bothering to take a poll. No one except the Governor himself knows exactly how much influence his own pollster, the legendarily reclusive Arthur Finkelstein, really exercises, but even Pataki's Republican allies gripe privately that Finkel-



Pataki, who grew up on a farm, is fond of vegetative metaphors: his preference for "work, not glitz" is like putting "the big berries in the bottom of the basket."

RICHARD THOMPSON



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stein wields something very close to veto power over government policy.

Certainly Pataki, given his ideological commitments, has taken some surprising positions. In the spring of 1997, for example, when the state's rent-control laws came up for renewal, Joseph Bruno, the Republican Senate Majority Leader, insisted that they ought to be scrapped. Of all the examples of wrongheaded liberal social engineering that conservatives love to rail about, rent control has got to rank near the top: it is anathema not just to free-marketeers but to economists of virtually all persuasions, and any politician who, like Pataki, claims to believe in smaller government and unfettered competition surely ought to be against it. Yet for much of the months-long rent-control debate, which infuriated hundreds of thousands of New York City tenants, Pataki said nothing; then, at the last minute, just as the laws were about to expire, he sold Bruno out by agreeing to a deal that preserved the system more or less as it was. Rumor has it that Bruno was so angry when he returned to the Capitol after a Father's Day luncheon with his family and learned the news that he knocked over a chair. Pataki, though he claims Teddy Roosevelt as his hero, never spoke out forcefully on rent control, or used his "bully pulpit" to try to sway public opinion. Had he taken such a political risk, the outcome might have been very different.

"YOU'RE not going to make fun of him, are you?" asked the first gubernatorial aide I approached, just after Thanksgiving, about the possibility of getting an interview with Pataki. After nearly a dozen phone calls, I finally got as far the Governor's communications director, Zenia Mucha, but she hardly seemed interested in communicating with me. "You haven't been exactly kind to him," she said, adding by way of further clarification that she had "a ton of other people" requesting interviews.

Pataki's relations with the press over the last four years have been civil but decidedly cool. He has never cultivated reporters, nor, one can surmise from the attitude of his aides, has he expected particularly sympathetic coverage. Unlike your run-of-the-mill New York politician, for a whom a day without a press conference is like no day at all, Pataki doesn't seem to live for, or even enjoy, talking into the microphones.

Since the election, however, the Governor has been much in demand, both as a voice of moderate Republicanism who can comment on the mess in Washington and as a possible candidate for national office. My concerns were closer to home. During the campaign, Pataki had left his agenda for a second term indefinite, and this vagueness was clearly strategic. Vallone had never had a chance to press him about it, because Pataki refused to appear on the same stage with him. (At one point, the City Council Speaker was left, literally, to debate an empty chair.) Pataki's excuse for this evasion was that Vallone had debased the race by engaging in personal attacks, a charge that not even the most wide-eyed supporter of the Governor could take seriously.

I finally got in to see Pataki a few days before Christmas. The Capitol was mostly empty again after a brief, hectic sojourn by the State Legislature, which had convened a special session in order to vote itself a pay raise. Pataki has taken the conference room where Cuomo used to hold sometimes two or three press briefings a day and converted it into a private office. It is hung with magnificent paintings of the Hudson River, on loan from various museums, depicting the hills that Pataki climbed as a child, and with a solemn portrait of Teddy Roosevelt. During our interview, Pataki was trying to catch up on his lunch, a turkey sandwich and some fruit salad, and was drinking from a bottle of Diet Snapple, which he kept diluting with bottled water.

In person, Pataki is a lot like the way he is onstage: affable, secure in himself, and utterly uninterested in exploring the dramatic possibilities of being governor. When I asked what we could expect from him over the next four years, he rehearsed the same airy talking points he had relied on in the fall. "What we said in '98 is that the best of New York is yet to come," he told me. "And it is. We're going to have a better state." He noted that, although he couldn't control national trends, "what we can do is build on our successes in improving the economic climate, continue to lead the nation in cutting taxes, continue to work to expand job opportunities and reduce the welfare rolls, continue to change the criminal-justice system to enhance public safety." When he was asked to be a bit more specific, the Governor said, "I can give you dozens of examples in all the areas," but he offered only one new proposal: "We've started a pilot program with the Albany Urban League here where we're taking people who have been trapped on welfare and training them to become painters, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and in the process you not only give them the skills to be contributing members but you're fixing up old, abandoned buildings and creating housing and economic opportunities. . . . I want to make this a statewide program."

Hoping to elicit something more provocative, I asked the Governor if he had any regrets about his first term. He said he did not. "You know, no one's perfect and you always make mistakes. But if someone had asked me in January of '95 'If you had accomplished what we've accomplished after ten years in office, would you think you had done a lot?' I would have said 'If we had done that in ten years I would have been very proud.' We've done it in four. . . . I don't second-guess myself and say, 'Maybe we should have done something different.' . . . I think we've just been—the state has been enormously successful."

Finally, I asked Pataki about the general perception in the press that he was, well, dull: didn't it bother him? "I'm just a boring guy," he said, and then paused awkwardly, as if waiting for someone to contradict him. "No," he went on. "The press is the press."

As I was leaving, the Governor returned to his desk and started to fiddle with his CD player. His favorite CD, I was told, is a soundtrack of birdsongs from species native to the state; Pataki said he was trying to learn to identify the birds by their calls. A bird chirped, and I asked him what it was.

"A grebe," he answered.

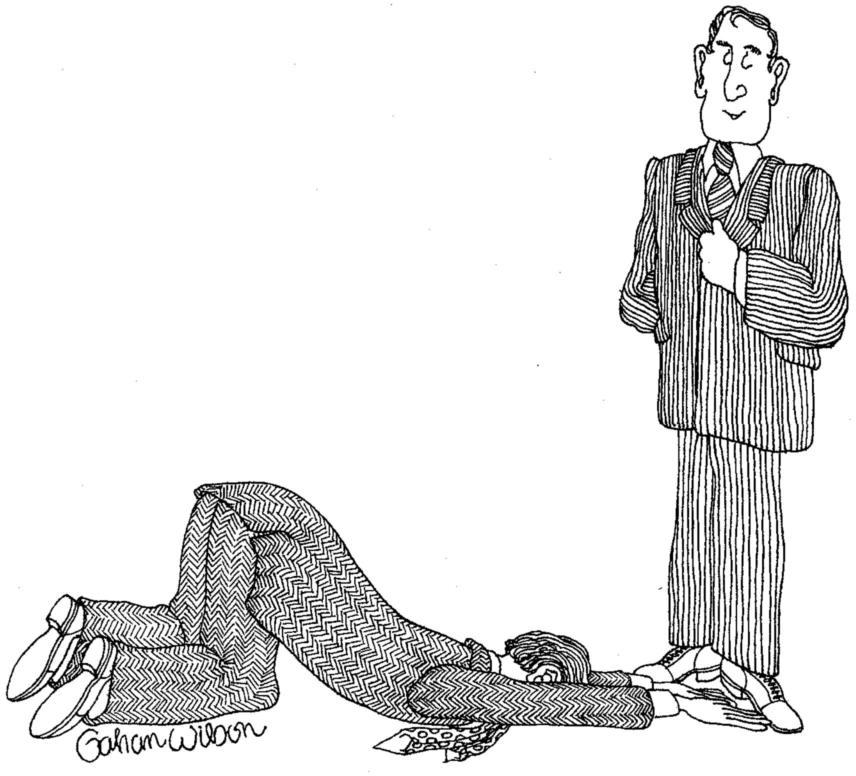
EARLY in Vallone's ill-fated race for the governorship, he commissioned a set of focus groups to gauge his chances of winning. Conducted in Buffalo, on Long Island, and in New York City, with independents and Democrats, the focus groups suggested that Vallone's odds were actually not so bad. "Over all, the discussions were very positive for Peter Vallone," said a memo from his pollsters—a memo that now seems almost poignant.

The pollsters based their optimism on the finding that impressions of Pataki were, in their words, "incredibly thin for a sitting Governor." When pressed by the focus-group leader to say what Pataki had accomplished or how he had changed the state, participants could hardly come up with anything. Only the death penalty and the welfare cuts were mentioned by more than one group. Thus, suggested the pollsters, it should be comparatively easy for Pataki's opponent to cut into his support with a few well-crafted attacks.

But the same report acknowledged that, if focus-group participants were only dimly familiar with Pataki and his accomplishments, they were not inclined to hold him to a particularly high standard. Participants said that they basically liked the Governor. They gave him credit for "trying," for "having exceeded expectations," and for generally "staying out of their lives while times are good." The praise may have been faint, but it wasn't damning.

Like President Clinton, who has been governing by small, mall-tested executive actions, Pataki seems, more than anything else, to appreciate What It Doesn't Take. Clinton, since the debacle of his health-care plan, has consistently avoided setting risky goals or pursuing projects that depend on swaying hearts and minds. Pataki needed no such painful education. As commentators on his State of the State were quick to point out, Pataki has a talent for simply ignoring issues he finds too politically messy to address.

Along with the speculation about his Presidential ambitions, there has been a good deal of talk these days about Pataki as a possible Vice-Presidential candidate—much of the talk, it must be admitted, originating from his own aides. To many, either scenario seems laughably unlikely. Why would George W. Bush—or whoever wins the Republican nomination—pick a running mate from a Democratic state like New York, and a hopelessly uncharismatic one at that? Still, Pataki's detractors have always underestimated his appeal; he *was* reëlected with the largest margin ever achieved by a Republican in the Empire State, though not, as his critics like to point out, with the highest absolute percentage of the vote. He won, it could be argued, not despite his limitations but because those limitations—imaginative as well as rhetorical—are so well suited to the age. We have, it increasingly seems, entered an era of post-inspirational politics. New York's official motto remains "Excelsior," but "Good Enough for Government Work" probably comes closer to the mark. ♦



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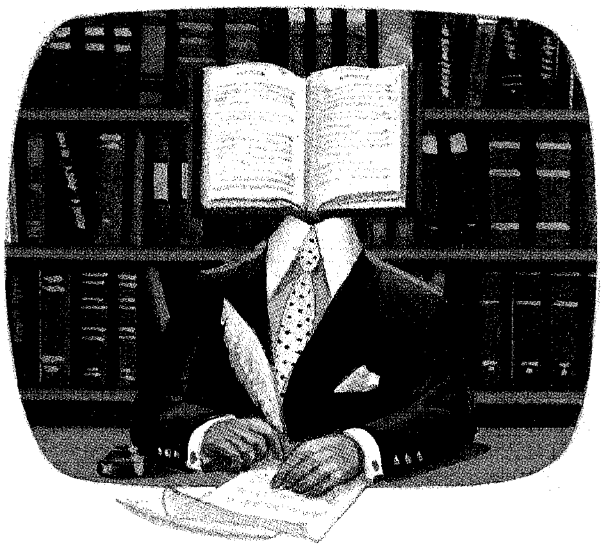
ANCHORS WEIGH IN

BY BRUCE McCALL

In "The Century"—a companion piece to ABC's ongoing "Century" project—Jennings has something more permanent, something large, something with heft—606 pages that will sit on shelves and coffee tables for many years.—*Chicago Sun-Times*

DIANE SAWYER'S magisterial history of Turkish agriculture in the reign of the Ottomans turns out to be far more enjoyable than its dry subject matter and intimidating 1,403 pages at first might suggest. Ms. Sawyer has clearly done her homework—besides drawing her own maps, indexing her copious footnotes, and personally curing the volume's Moroccan leather binding. Relying strictly on her own research and eschewing all secondary sources, Ms. Sawyer brings alive such forgotten figures as the fifteenth-century rutabaga broker Vopid the Tense (almost offhandedly proving him a more credible claimant to the title Sultan of Early Anitolian Roughage than Klangmar, the darling of so many previous scholars), while consigning such pseudo-events in pre-Akbar drought folklore as the 1453-54 Ankara Sponge Riots to what she rightly terms "both the ash and trash heaps of history." Gumpf has already printed ten million copies of Ms. Sawyer's "Turkish Agriculture in the Reign of the Ottomans." They may not be nearly enough.



BRUCE McCALL

WHAT can be said of Dan Rather's "Aleksander Sergeyevich Pushkin: The Real Story" that will not strike readers of this review as arrant puffery? That Mr. Rather not only seems to walk in Pushkin's shoes but his socks as well? That he goes the extra mile that was always a trek too far for Nabokov and Edmund Wilson, virtually redefining the significance of Pushkin's boyhood infatuation with matches? If the author's translations from the Russian occasionally rankle with their slangy Petersburgian burr, his translations to the Russian ("*nyemni pa bidynki*" for "forbearance notwithstanding," for example) are pellucidity incarnate. In his foreword, Mr. Rather makes light of his achievement, which he calls "this slapdash bagatelle, knocked out on a laptop many a late night after one too many, when I didn't have the energy to shoot a few baskets." One can only wonder at the Pushkin biography that might have been engendered had Mr. Rather taken his time. Chartered container ships packed with copies of "Aleksander Sergeyevich Pushkin: The Real Story" destined for overseas markets are reportedly causing gridlock in the Panama Canal.

BRAVO! Connie Chung, in "Salt II: An Encyclopedia of Reason," not only has revisited Salt Treaty II but brings forward a brief so airtight—and so cogently proceeds to argue it—that all previous books on the subject are suddenly relegated to the realm of intellectual dwarfism. Ms. Chung's four hundred and thirty-two Points of Difference with the treaty's final draft constitute a devastating indictment of woolly-mindedness and point up the danger of accepting quarter-truths as half-truths in the endgame that is modern nuclear physics. If this reviewer can presume to raise a complaint about a work so fastidiously executed, it is that Ms. Chung's epilogue, an imagined discussion between the author and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, never quite manages to engage the Horsemen on NATO's ambivalence about the mistaken 1974 Slingshot-missile count. But this is a quibble. Bravo, Ms. Chung.

SAM DONALDSON had maintained what he terms "an offhand sort of interest" in grand opera all his life. Only after fainting from joy one evening during last year's Beijing Opera production of "Tristan und Isolde," performed in Chinese, did he recognize his desire to write a book about opera's hundred most unsung geniuses. What has resulted—"Kudos Overdue"—is not a book. It is a wonderment. How Mr. Donaldson found the time to comb every libretto ever written, cross-index the more than four hundred thousand suicides, stabbings, and seductions thus compiled, then write his own "mega-opera" including each and every such event, against a score incorporating the signature musical styles of every opera composer who ever lived—all for the sake of amplifying a comment on Mozart's versatility—is not the least of the mysteries occasioned by the magnitude of Mr. Donaldson's accomplishments. Barnes & Noble stores have cleared out all other books and will stock only this one for the rest of the year. Still, hurry.

BARBARA WALTERS'S epic history of the past millennium finds room for many a fascinating and insightful nugget. Did you know that Ethelred the Unready was an albino? That the first automobile had no wheels? It might surprise even classical scholars to know that Athenian law in Socrates' time prescribed exile to Sparta for feeding the squirrels. But in "The Complete History of the Past Thousand Years," Ms. Walters is after bigger game than simple entertainment. With a brush as broad as it is thick, she paints a thousand-year-wide mural—no, a diorama—that encircles the reader in a historical merry-go-round and will not let him dismount until every jot and tittle of a millennium of human striving has been documented, asterisked, annotated, and ibided. The sheer weight of erudition in Ms. Walters's epic volume may be enough to bring lay readers to their knees, but the author makes no apologies. "If you don't get it," she snaps in her introduction, "go watch television." ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

DECODING ICELAND

The next big medical breakthroughs may result from one scientist's battle to map the Viking gene pool.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

IF not for a single genetic peculiarity, passed invisibly through the generations, it is unlikely that we would know a thing about a sixteenth-century Icelandic cleric named Einar. That's no surprise; on the surface, at least, he does not appear to have been unusual. Genealogies suggest that he was one of about four hundred men named Einar living at the time—each of them struggling among the high moors and dwarf birches on the edge of the habitable world. Einar's ancestors had managed to survive the black plague, in the early fifteenth century, which killed as many as forty thousand people—two-thirds of the population—and some of his descendants lived through the next epidemic: smallpox, which struck in 1707, just as the livestock and the settlers were beginning to flourish again on the farmsteads of the countryside. This time, more than fifteen thousand people—a third of the population—perished.

Not only did each of these disasters kill many people but there was an equally dramatic, Darwinian effect: they cut back sharply on the genetic diversity of the island—as if a giant tree had been pruned again and again until only its trunk and a few of the sturdiest branches remained. The entire population had descended from a small band of ninth- and tenth-century Norse settlers mixed with a few early Irish slaves. The island had almost no immigration from then until the Second World War, so for more than a thousand years Icelanders bred among themselves. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the population stood at fewer than fifty thousand, no more than it had been five hundred years before.

The greatest calamity was still to come, however. In 1783, Lakagigar, a volcano in southern Iceland, erupted. By the time the lava stopped, eight months later, it had produced the biggest flow in recorded times—more than two hundred square miles of fire and ash. In a remarkable diary, which was eventually published under the title "Fires of the Earth," the Reverend Jon Steingrimsson wrote:

> The flood of fire flowed with the speed of a great river swollen with meltwater on a spring day. In the middle of the flood of fire great cliffs and slabs of rock were swept along, tumbling about like large whales swimming, red-hot and glowing.

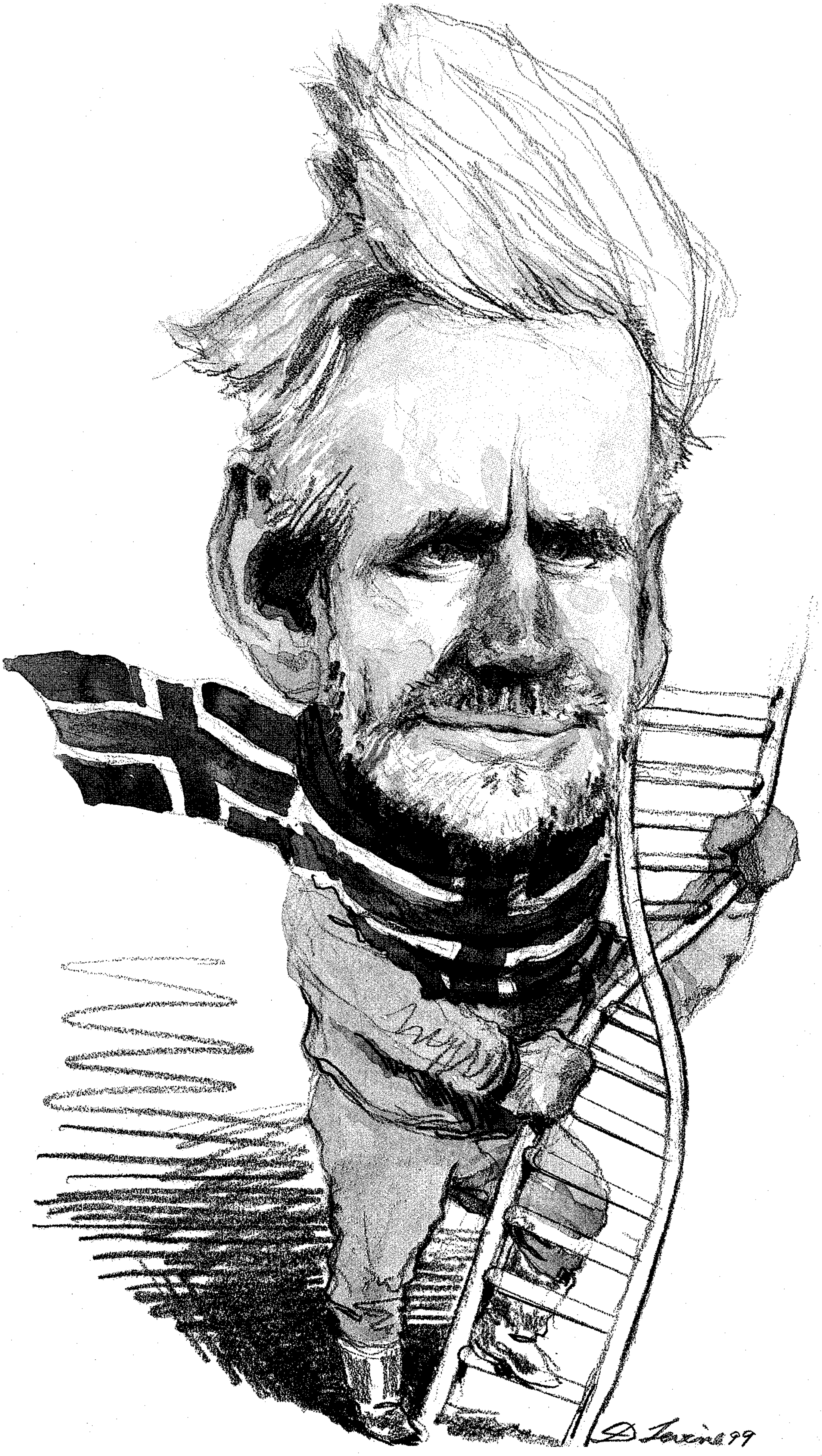
The eruption itself killed few people, but the sulfur dioxide it released was among the deadliest events in the history of Iceland. It blanketed the earth with a dusty poison, and twenty-five per cent of the population died in the resulting famine, as did almost all the horses and sheep. A toxic cloud smothered the nation. Tales of crop damage, drought, asthma, headaches, and a widespread fear of damnation were common throughout Europe. "Those terrors that fell over and upon us I can hardly describe," Steingrimsson wrote. "It will be for all eternity a source of the greatest wonder, that any living thing should have survived."

Many did survive, of course—the descendants of Einar among them. We know this now because it turns out that there was something special about that sixteenth-century cleric after all: one of his genes was missing five units of DNA—a mistake on the scale of having mistyped one letter in a volume that holds all the plays of Shakespeare. Such mutations—permanent changes in the order of genetic information—are not rare. Everyone is born with them. They are almost always harmless.

Einar's was not. The mutation he carried, in which a few of the basic units of DNA had accidentally been deleted from a gene that is now known as BRCA2, is responsible for virtually every case of hereditary breast cancer in Iceland today. Both women and men with this mutation have an extremely high risk of developing cancer, because one function of that gene is to make a protein that repairs DNA when things go wrong. BRCA2 and BRCA1 (the latter is the first gene that was shown to cause breast cancer, and to do so in even greater numbers) are thought to suppress tumors, when they are working normally. Mutations like the one that was traced to Einar through his descendants lie dormant in the cells unless—or until—the remaining good copy of the gene is lost or damaged. That begins the mysterious chain of events that, in ways still not fully understood, ultimately lead to cancer. Researchers at the Icelandic Cancer Society were able to discover Einar's mutation because they worked on a remote island where nearly every genetic possibility could be examined with the kind of detail that would be impossible anywhere else. Many mutations of these genes exist, and so far more than a hundred are associated with BRCA1. But after examining five hundred and seventy-five Icelandic breast-cancer patients, including thirty-four men who had been found to have the disease since the Second World War, researchers discovered only one BRCA2 mutation in Iceland: Einar's. That means scientists don't have to guess what caused cancer in those people; they know. And knowing the root of a disease is the first step along the difficult road toward curing it.

IT'S a cliché, but the first thing a visitor to Iceland notices, after the volcanic landscape that lies beneath the approach to Keflavik International Airport, is just how closely Icelanders resemble each other. From Geysir, which has become the generic name for half the spouting

"The people still support me, and the doctors think I'm the Devil," Stefansson says. "So it's time to just let the future happen."



DAVID LEVINE

hot springs on earth, to the Levittown-like suburbs that threaten to overwhelm the rustic, port-side ambience of Reykjavik, Iceland sometimes seems to be inhabited by one enormous family, not one of whose members ever leaves the neighborhood where he was born.

It is the unique nature of this extended family that made Einar's genetic flaw so easy to find: the hereditary instructions for blue eyes and blond hair, which are so prevalent in Iceland, have been passed undiluted through a small gene pool for fifty generations. After a thousand years of plagues, epidemics, earthquakes, and volcanoes finished weeding out the population, what remains in the middle of the turbulent fishing grounds of the North Atlantic is a nation of two hundred and seventy thousand of the most genetically similar people on earth—a place where phone numbers are organized by first names. It takes an amateur genealogist with a five-hundred-dollar computer about three minutes to show how any two Icelanders are related.

No hobby could be more useful to molecular biologists. Prospecting for genetic flaws has become the age's great Klondike: researchers from Newfoundland to Papua New Guinea are sifting through the world's genetic heritage looking for the causes of common diseases by comparing the DNA of sick people with that of their healthy relatives. You can't do that easily in a racially and ethnically diverse place like America; if people's backgrounds, habits, genetic composition, and environments are all different, then so, almost certainly, are the causes of their illnesses. But many scientists believe that Iceland, with a history of isolation and of the repeated catastrophes that have kept the population small, is the richest natural genetics laboratory on earth.

Recent cancer research helps show why. Most breast cancer is not inherited; when it is, the genetic component is almost always complex. If five women in New York City (or in Bombay, Moscow, or Tokyo) each had an inherited form of breast cancer, the causes, the actual genetic mutations, would vary. Some would have one mutation; others another; the cancer of still others might be a result of subtle interaction among several seemingly unrelated genes. But if those women were from Iceland such differences wouldn't exist; each almost certainly would have an identical genetic flaw, inherited from that same clergyman—Einar.

"This is the absolute essence of human genetics," Mary-Claire King told me on the telephone one day from the University of Washington, where she is a professor in the Departments of Medicine and Genetics. King, who is among the world's most prominent geneticists, spent nearly two decades searching for the first breast-cancer gene. "To be able to trace the genealogy of an entire nation for a thousand years, and then to have the ability to obtain samples of blood and tissue from healthy living people and to compare the DNA with the tissue of those who have died, and to actually see the differences," King said with obvious excitement, "that information could become one of the treasures of modern medicine." She went on to say, "The first breast-cancer gene took me seventeen years just to map. Comparable work on the second gene was done in about two years. A lot of that credit goes to vastly improved technology. But it is also true that the single, ancient BRCA2 mutation was a golden key. Iceland is just an amazing place to do genetics. The population there is like a gift from heaven."

Victoria Roberts

"I'm trying not to badger—how am I doing?"

It was impossibly dreary in Reykjavik at eight on the November morning that Kari Stefansson arrived to show me how he plans to turn Iceland into the Athens of genetic research. The mountain basin that rings the city was covered with what looked like ash. The day was sleeting and dark, and remained that way for at least two hours—until the sun began vaguely to skirt the horizon. By noon, waiters were putting candles on the tables in the city's lunch spots. Shortly after that, complete darkness returned. "You get used to it," said Stefansson, who is forty-nine and is unquestionably the most controversial man in a country usually more occupied with fishing rights and the quality of sheepskin. Stefansson, a neurologist, is the founder of Iceland's first biotechnology firm, Decode Genetics, and he has developed a plan to take all the research gifts that the country offers and create a giant electronic database, which will allow his firm to hunt for the causes of dozens of common diseases. Most genetic researchers agree that such a database could become a scientific instrument of unparalleled power, but the proposal has also set off one of the most rancorous debates in the long history of Iceland.

In return for conceiving, creating, and paying for this database, which Stefansson says will cost his company at least a hundred and fifty million dollars, the government will grant Decode exclusive rights to market it abroad for twelve years. The plan has stimulated great excitement among researchers throughout the world. No other country—and certainly no other private company—has ever tried to collect, store, package, and sell a nation's genetic heritage.

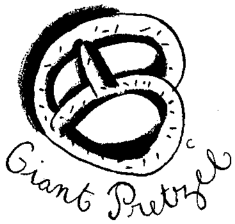
The proposal also frightens many people, in part because the relationship between genetics and commerce often seems somewhat threatening. But there is more than that: under a bill that has come before Iceland's parliament, the Althing, Decode would become the sole manager of this vast collection of information. Many critics say that Iceland, by becoming the first nation to catalogue its gene pool completely and then make it available to a private company, risks yielding control of the fundamental mystery of its existence.

At six feet five, Stefansson is tall even for a Viking, and he speaks in a toned-down brogue that makes him sound a bit like a scholarly Sean Connery. On the day we met, he picked me up in his car, a blue Saab, and I found him hunched over the wheel, muttering to himself, darkly. After a minute or two, I saw the wire dangling from his ear: he was talking—rather forcefully—on a cell phone, something he did at least once during nearly every conversation we had.

"I'm so sorry," he said, sheepishly, as he hung up. "If I seem preoccupied today that is because my enemies have deposited the usual lies and half-truths in the newspapers again. They are saying that if we go forward with genetic research in this country, if I am allowed to prepare the database that will help solve so many medical mysteries and make heroes of the people here, then Iceland will be stigmatized and the people will become pariahs in the world. What a horrendous crock of shit."

Stefansson is a flamboyant man in a very gray land; yet he is charming and well read enough to salt most conversations with apposite lines from Auden, Yeats, or Iceland's great Nobelist, Halldor Laxness. Like many medical entrepreneurs, he is often accused of being more interested in deals than in research, but, in our discussions, he sometimes seemed interested in neither. When I asked him what kind of scientist he considered himself to be, he said he didn't really see himself as a scientist at all.

"I look at myself as a failed writer," he said, without any of the grim self-consciousness that usually accompanies such comments. "A successful man is a great writer. But as a writer and as a journalist, if you are any good at all, you watch. You are outside events. You can never really participate, and I am afraid that my personality does not allow me to stand on the outside." Stefansson's eloquence is one of the reasons he has become so controversial in Iceland: he is an unusually effective advocate for his ideas.

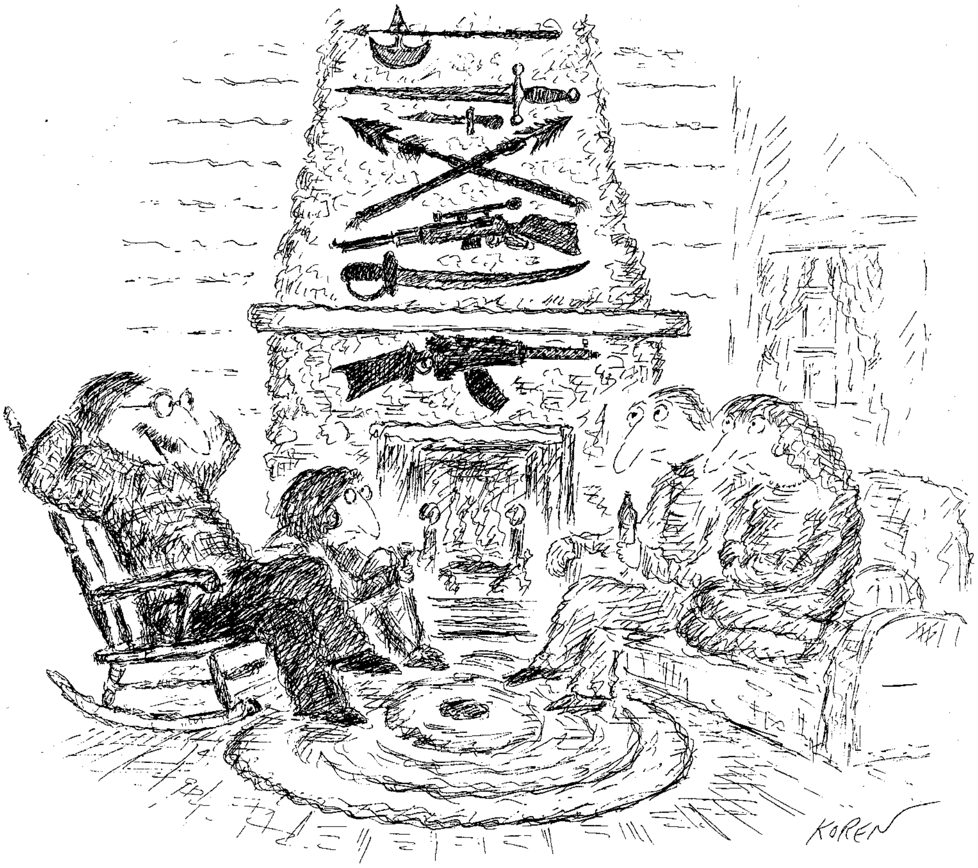


But if Stefansson is incisive and determined, he also seems incapable of humility, and he treats his intellectual combatants with contempt. "When the newspapers say that I am the most popular person in Iceland, and when they say that I am the most intelligent man in Iceland, I don't even want to respond to that," he remarked one day, although I had not asked him about any such thing. "But when they say that I could be elected to any office I desire—I can assure you that is true." At the moment, however, he is not seeking elective office; his ambitions are much greater. "I want to cure major diseases," he told me matter-of-factly. "I want to use this tool to generate unbelievable amounts of vital knowledge."

"THIS tool" is Stefansson's ambitious plan to create a central health database; it will include nearly every significant medical and genetic fact about every citizen of Iceland. But the country has far more than raw data to offer scientists: Iceland has a national system of medical insurance which keeps immaculate records concerning almost every major illness since 1915; it has an immense and well-documented tissue bank that can be used as a modern history of the nation's DNA; it has a reservoir of patients who trust their doctors and are far more willing to participate in medical research than people in many other countries. And what is perhaps most important is that Iceland has such a profound passion for recording its ancestry that Decode has already compiled a database with the family histories of nearly seventy-five per cent of the eight hundred thousand Icelanders who have ever lived.

Genealogy is the national obsession. When somebody dies, the local newspapers always carry an obituary, listing in great detail a family tree, with names and dates of birth that can go back for a hundred years or more. At a dinner party in Reykjavik, I asked a biologist to translate an obituary—one I had selected pretty much at random from that day's paper. He dutifully began, and by the time he had gone through the parents and the children, the brothers and the cousins, and back to a great-grandmother on the maternal side of the dead man's family, he looked up with a grin and said, "Hey, I think she was my wife's great-grandmother, too." The University of Iceland has a professor of genealogy; there is a daily column on the subject in one of the newspapers; it is against the law for anyone to change his or her last name, which is a patronymic; and the government exempts most genealogical data from basic privacy laws. Newspaper profiles often include a detailed account of that person's family tree.

"Why all this genealogy?" Stefansson said over dinner one night. "Look around this barren land. There are no remains. No sculptures. No cathedrals from hundreds of years ago. The country was too poor for any of that. There was a culture here for eleven hundred years, but try to find it. There were books that survive and they are the only way we have to convince ourselves that we fit into the context of human history. Write it all down," he said, referring to the single lasting legacy of ancient Iceland, the sagas—the most complete profile of any Western medieval society. The sagas present a vast literary and historical portrait of the feuds, battles, seductions, and triumphs of early Icelandic society. They almost always begin with long lists of genealogical information, and they are alive for Iceland today because, unlike Old English, Swedish, or Norwegian, all of which have changed dramatically, Icelandic has remained essentially the same. If you can read an Icelandic magazine article today, you can read the saga about the warrior Egill Skal-



"I am not a vengeful man, but I do enjoy a touch of retribution now and then."

lagrimsson, written in the thirteenth century.

"This was our means of survival," Stefansson said. "People were huddled on mountains in the howling wind. For eleven hundred years, everything in Iceland has always been about the lists of names. It's what we all have in common. Without those links we really have no heritage."

GENETICISTS have been relying on family histories to explore the roots of human disease at least since the mid-nineteenth century, when Darwin's cousin Francis Galton coined the term "eugenics," one of the most heavily freighted words in the history of science. Galton was convinced that such characteristics as intelligence were inherited and that a society could breed for them the way you breed an Irish setter or a Vidalia onion. For years, Icelandic researchers have recognized the special characteristics of the country's segregated DNA, but it was Kari Stefansson who first seems to have understood what Iceland could contribute to the current frenzied hunt for the genetic causes of human illness. The idea for a computerized database that would incorporate all of the country's essential health and genetic information has the unwavering support of, among others, Prime Minister David Oddsson, and it has met with strong approval in polls. One obvious reason for that support is the potential payoff: pharmaceutical companies are expected to spend enormous sums—billions of dollars—if Decode is able to identify genes that contribute to major diseases. More than one Icelandic politician has expressed the hope that the Decode database might do for Iceland what North Sea oil did for Norway.

Yet scientists in Iceland, and many abroad, have become enraged by the notion that such a treasure could simply be handed over to Decode. They argue, often bitterly, that surrendering such a resource to a private company will jeopardize patients' privacy, violate long-established standards of medical ethics, and prevent other researchers from taking advantage of this invaluable new tool. There is also a widely shared belief that if a bonanza is to be made from the DNA of the Icelandic people most of the profits should go to the nation, and not to Decode.

"This is what colonial treasure hunters have done for hundreds of years," I was told by the geneticist Mary-Claire King. Like many of her colleagues, she sees the promise of the research but also worries about the potential for harm in such a vast arsenal of biological data. "It is not that it wasn't important to find gold, diamonds, and minerals in Africa or Mexico," she said. "It was taking the treasures away and the absolute evisceration of the societies that were there which were wrong. This is the twenty-first-century version of that. It is an elegant approach, which could yield much information—nobody disputes that. But there is a price. And if the price is the destruction of the field of genetics in Iceland—or the loss of the trust patients put in their doctors—then perhaps elegance isn't all that matters."

Stefansson concedes he was not prepared for opposition of that sort, and he acknowledges that early versions of the database plan were badly flawed in their naïveté. But he dismisses current criticism mostly as the prejudice of competing scientists and partly as a reaction to anything far-reaching and new. "Now it has become like the Sturla period in Iceland again," he said one day, referring to a famous saga of the thirteenth century, when warriors dismantled their commonwealth and splattered each other's brains against stone walls. "I am besieged by little people. This is a fascinating controversy and I understand it well. But these few people, opponents"—he spat the word out as if it were a rusty nail—"are scared of change and unwilling to lose their standing in the scientific community. But remember one thing while you are ingesting their propaganda: those who are opposed to what we are trying to do are a small group. They are not important. And they will lose."

STEFANSSON has white hair and a white beard that are short but fashionably messy, and his usual choice of clothing—muted earth tones blended with black and gray—makes him look rather like the carefully dishevelled director of an experimental theatre group instead of what he is: a physician, an entrepreneur, and a professor. He is intensely competitive; he plays basketball regularly, and "with an extreme and sometimes ugly need to win," according to one of his colleagues. Lately, he has lost so much weight (from the basketball and a lot of worrying) that his secretary provides him with a daily bright-pink protein milkshake and makes sure he drinks it all.

Stefansson's father was Iceland's most famous radio personality and a frequently published writer; his wife raised their five children. Stefansson was evidently audacious from the start. When he was twelve, his father made him an offer: if he learned to type he could transcribe all his father's book manuscripts. For several years, Kari had a great summer job; then one day his father happened to read through one of his published books. "He found that I had changed a few sentences," Stefansson told me. "The changes were not big, but they were absolutely necessary. That wasn't the way he saw it, of course, and my career as a typist ended that minute."

Stefansson spent fifteen years at the University of Chicago, where he became a tenured professor of neurology. He returned to Iceland very briefly, to run the Institute of Pathology, then the country's most distinguished scientific research organization, and afterward spent five years as a professor of neurology and pathology at the Harvard Medical School.

In the early nineties, after travelling to Iceland to do research on his special area of interest, which is related to multiple sclerosis, Stefansson realized that the island was an ideal place to pursue the origins of almost any common disease in which a genetic component played an important role. Although genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis or sickle-cell anemia are caused by the mutations of individual genes which can be best traced in families, the most common illnesses, among them cancer, heart disease, and many psychiatric disorders, can be fully examined only by studying a much larger population. Those diseases almost certainly have an environmental component as well as a genetic one, and such complexity makes them incredibly difficult to understand. There are three billion pairs of chemical bases—the building blocks of DNA—in each person's body and as many as a hundred thousand genes in the human genome. The process of deducing the causes of a common illness is one of the most daunting ever faced by medicine.

Geneticists recognized long ago that the people of Iceland, despite their relative seclusion, developed serious modern conditions, like cancer and heart disease, in roughly the same proportion that people do in other industrialized countries. Iceland is not a bizarre offshoot of humanity—such as, for instance, the tiny Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, where nearly a third of its three hundred residents have asthma. "Iceland reflects the gene pool of Northern Europe in about 800 A.D.," I was told by Jeff Gulcher, an American former doctoral student of Stefansson's, who is now Decode's chief of research and development. "This is not a rare, special twig of evolution. It is a central branch. When you look at disease here, it ought to be able to tell you much about the cause of human illness in general."

That is what Decode is counting on. In 1996, Stefansson set out to raise capital at a time when investors had become skeptical about the many unfulfilled promises made by companies claiming that genetic research would solve the ills of humanity. He was a forceful salesman, however, and raised twelve million dollars in three months, at which point he left his job at Harvard, returned home, and began working with physicians and their patients, trying to discover disease-prone genes.

DECODE soon managed to provide two hundred and fifty well-paid research jobs in a country that earns nearly three-quarters of its income from fishing and has struggled to build a

"I don't sing. I do standup."

broader base for its economy. (Iceland's entire federal research budget—sixty-five million dollars in 1997—is less than the amount dispensed for research so far by Decode.) "Kari was treated like a god when he returned," I was told by Jorunn Erla Eyfjord, who is the head of molecular genetics for the Icelandic Cancer Society. Eyfjord, who carried out essential work that helped locate the second breast-cancer gene, is a strong critic of Stefansson's plan for a comprehensive database. "People just acted like he had discovered medicine and brought it to Iceland."

People grew more excited when, in February of 1998, Decode signed a contract with Hoffman-La Roche, among the largest agreements so far reached between a genomics company and a major pharmaceutical firm. Roche, which is based in Switzerland, agreed to pay Decode more than two hundred million dollars over the next five years if the company manages to identify genes involved with many of the world's most potent diseases, among them schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, stroke, heart disease, and emphysema. Roche will get the right to develop diagnostic tests and, it hopes, drugs based on any genes that Decode might discover. In return, the company has promised to provide any such tests and drugs without charge to all Icelanders who need them. It is a potentially lucrative arrangement for both sides.

Once the information from the comprehensive database becomes available (Stefansson thinks that this will not happen until at least two years after Decode gets its license), there is little question that many other companies—and possibly some nations—will pay dearly for what it could generate. In the past, drugs were discovered almost by chance. Researchers would identify the proteins that seemed to be associated with a disease—it was often guesswork, intuition, or luck—and then they would try out thousands of animal and plant compounds to find something that blocked that protein without doing serious damage to the rest of the body. Cancer drugs can be especially dangerous because to kill tumor cells one often has to use chemicals that destroy many healthy cells, too. Genomics—the study of the genetic heritage of a species—is supposed to provide a sophisticated alternative to that. In theory, at least, once it is discovered that a gene can cause or play a role in a disease, scientists should be able to understand the molecular basis for that disease—the chemical blueprints—and then design drugs to repair or even prevent the damage. That is why pharmaceutical companies are investing billions of dollars; the potential bounty for each gene will be immense. There will be many hurdles: genes come in all shapes and sizes, and while some provide obvious openings for drugs others do not. But every time a gene is discovered to play a significant role in a disease the financial and health implications are going to be enormous.

SOON after Decode signed its deal with Roche, the company's cluttered labs filled with expensive gene-sequencing equipment and two dozen of the latest robotic PCR, or polymerase-chain-reaction, machines. PCR is the workhorse of the genomic revolution, because the technique is used to amplify a tiny amount of DNA and permit researchers to catalogue and then compare it. Young Icelandic scientists began returning from M.I.T., Berkeley, and Harvard, largely because there was at last something to come home to. The cheerful, open labs at Decode, which look more like commercial kitchens than like medical-research facilities, have turned into the best place in Iceland to do advanced molecular research.

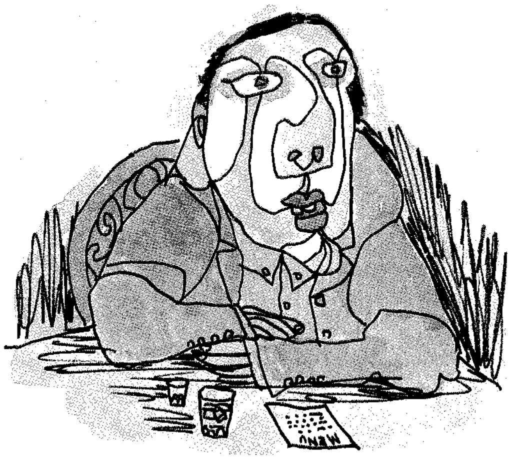
The strategy has been this: the company works with physicians across Iceland in order to study diseases ranging from diabetes to colon cancer to psoriasis. Doctors take blood from consenting patients and send it to the company with an encrypted number replacing the name of the patient. The researchers at Decode process the DNA, looking for important genetic markers for each patient. The raw genetic facts (called genotypes) are then compared to the physical condition of each patient (the phenotype). At the same time, Decode turns to its genealogical database to search for familial patterns of illness. That way, specialists are able to make highly sophisticated statistical interpretations of genetic relationships among people, and to find the best places in the incomprehensibly large universe of human DNA to look for genes that may cause illness.

Decode had some initial success by identifying the location of one of the central genes responsible for a syndrome called familial essential tremor, or F.E.T.—a degenerative neurological condition that causes uncontrollable shaking of the arms and the head, and affects millions of people. That work was completed before Decode assembled its genealogical database. More recently, in its hunt for the molecular roots of multiple sclerosis, Decode has managed to narrow the search to one piece of DNA with three or possibly four genes on it—a bit like scouring the earth for a grain of sand and reducing the possible locations to a single beach.

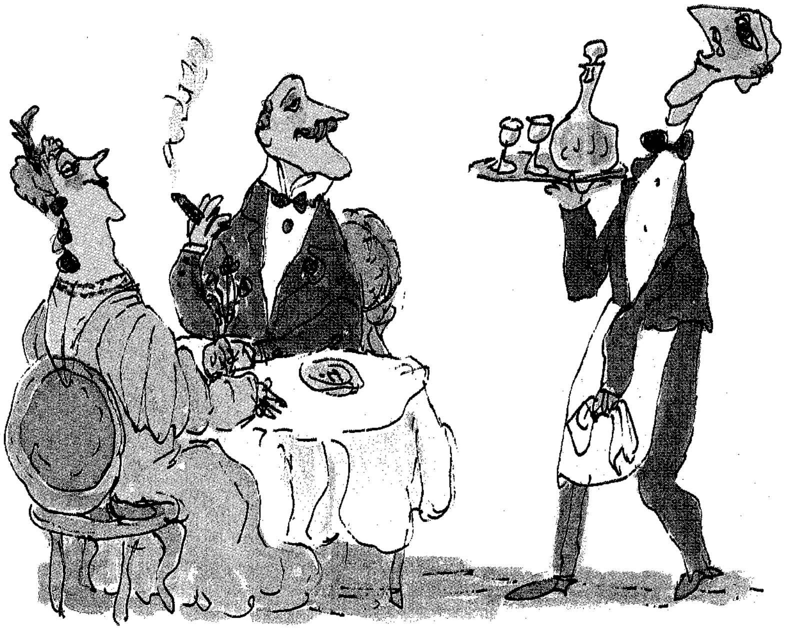
In the summer of 1998, the company, together with one of Reykjavik's most prominent physicians, began to investigate the origins of endometriosis, which is the leading cause of infertility in the United States; it occurs when cells from the lining of the uterus appear in other areas. Endometriosis has been regarded as, in Stefansson's words, "a hideous, baffling, and completely sporadic disease," because "nobody could say why some women get it and some do not." Now Decode is in the midst of computer-generated detective work on the subject. After replacing the names of the women in the study with secret I.D. numbers, Decode ran the numbers through its genealogy database. With one glance at the family pedigrees of the patients, even an uninitiated observer could see that many of them were related. The results would have surprised the women themselves. (Despite Iceland's sophisticated sense of family history, few people there can name their fourth or fifth cousins. The database, however, connects distant relatives in minutes.) "We take blood from the patient and scan it," Gulcher, who is the energetic floor leader of the Decode lab, told me. "We look at DNA of their healthy relatives to see if it's different. Then we can do a statistical analysis to see what they share with their cousins, for example. Do they share the same sequence more commonly than you would expect cousins to share genetic information?" Mendel's laws of inheritance tell you that cousins should share DNA one-eighth of the time. A larger proportion suggests that something may be worth investigation. "This

DINING OUT

BY WILLIAM STEIG



Dilemma—Veal or Chicken?



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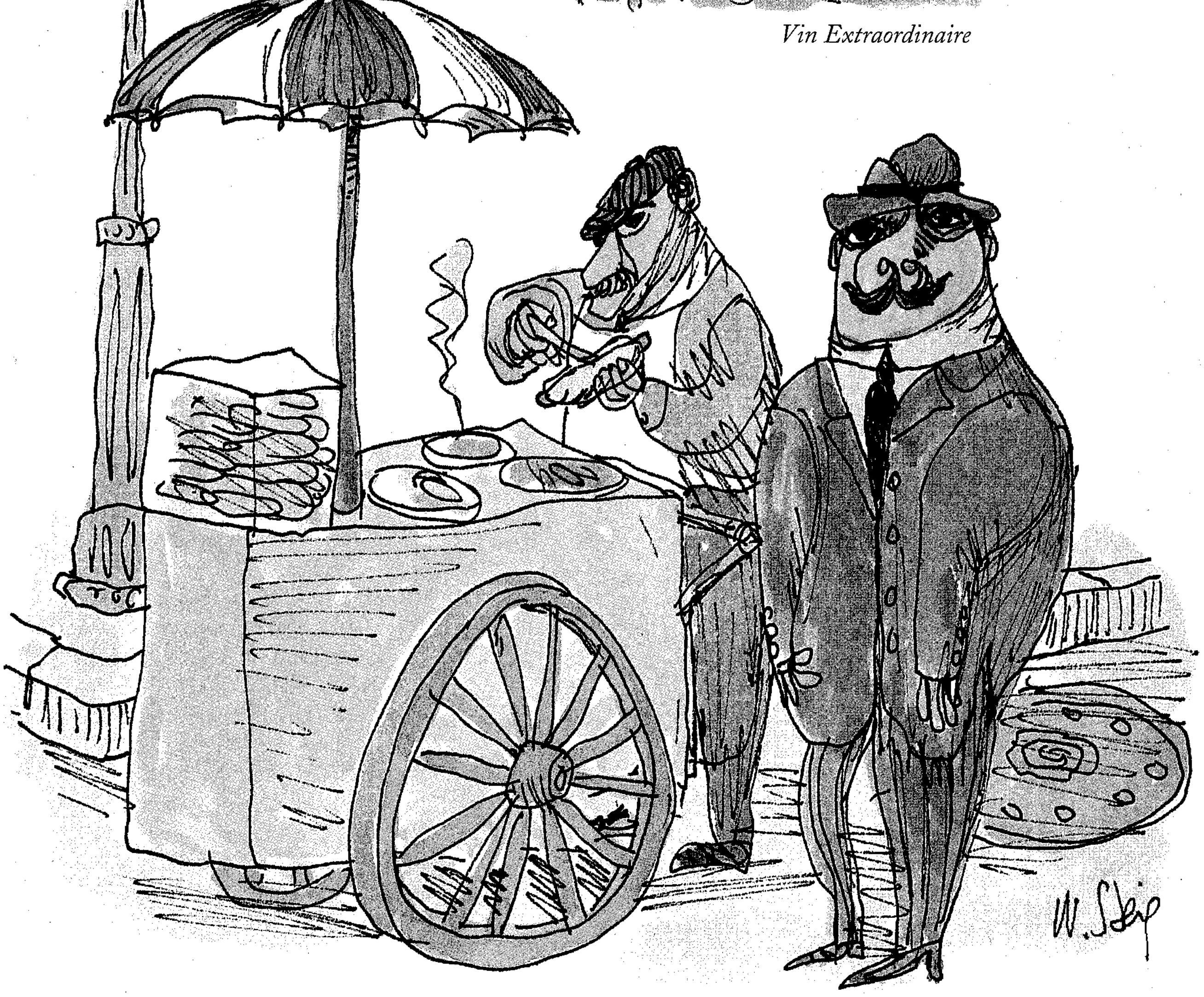


Saucissons Alfresco

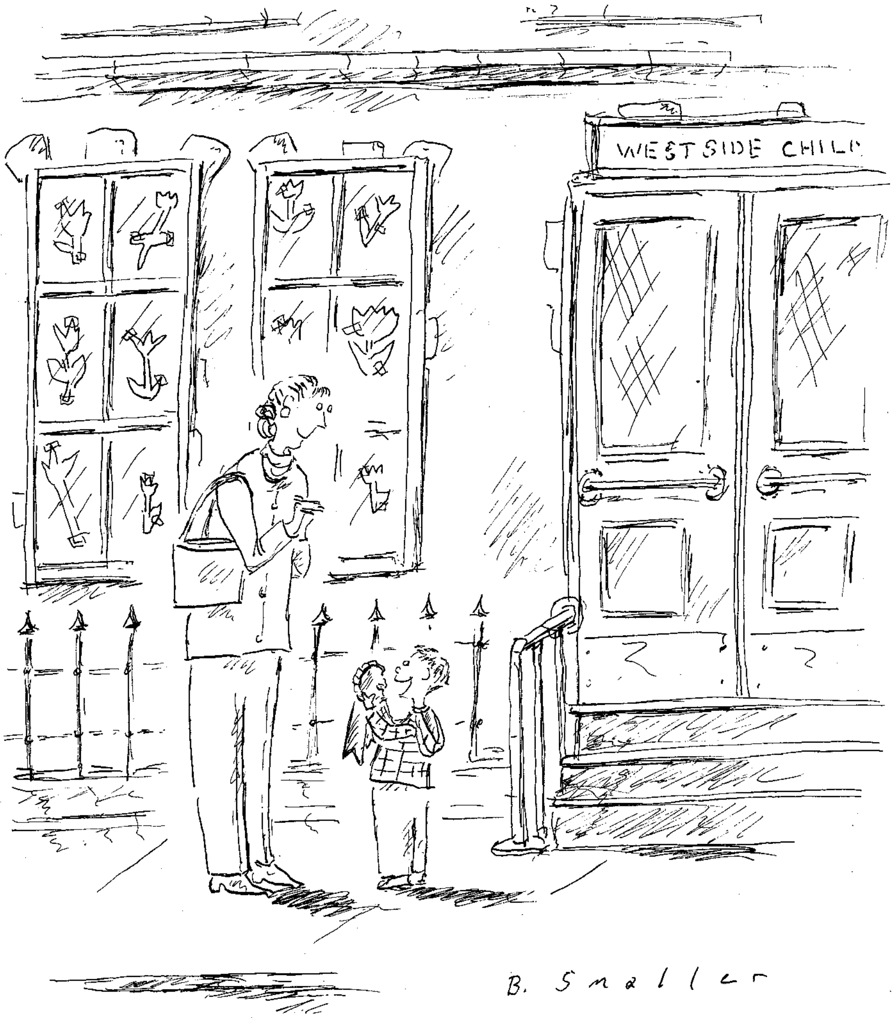
way we winnow and winnow till we find the places they have in common which could be responsible for this disease," Gulcher said.

One day, almost as a lark, Stefansson set out to do the same sort of research on longevity. It has been generally assumed that there are at least some genetic reasons that cause certain people to live longer than others. But does that mean that these people are just lucky enough to have none of the genetic mutations or other problems that kill people at earlier ages, or are there actually stretches of DNA that instruct genes to help people live a long time?

"Right before I left the University of Chicago, in 1993, I admitted the oldest living American to the hospital," Stefansson told me. "She was a hundred and sixteen. I was just wondering why she lived so long, and I asked her. She told me she gave up drinking when she was ninety. That was cute but obviously wasn't the reason. Still, you do always wonder what makes them different."

So Stefansson turned to the computer. He and Gulcher selected the five per cent of Icelanders among the hundreds of thousands in their genealogical database who had lived the longest—most of them over ninety. The database allowed the two scientists to seek an answer to a simple question: Are these people who live so long related to each other more often than the average in Iceland? The answer quickly became apparent. People over ninety are much more closely related to each other than people in the general population are, and their children are more likely to live longer than the children of others. That provides strong evidence that the trait is inherited.

The next step, of course, is to find out how—and that, of course, is where information from the controversial database could prove so valuable. If you could compare the actual DNA of people who live longest with the DNA of their dead relatives (and then search the genealogy for more comparisons), it would greatly enhance the possibility of finding a shared, special gene or set of genes able to influence longevity. That sort of unified theory of genetic research has always been Stefansson's ultimate goal.



"I won it for being the most noncompetitive in preschool."

WHEN the bill to establish the Icelandic Health Care Database was introduced, last spring, people were astonished by the haste with which Stefansson and his allies in the government had acted. There did not seem to be any room for discussion or disagreement. "That is when we all just got off the train," Sigmundur Gudbjarnason, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Iceland, told me. Gudbjarnason, who is often referred to in Reykjavik as the founding father of Icelandic biotechnology, helped start a movement to oppose Stefansson. "My whole life has been dedicated to promoting science in Iceland in every feasible way," Gudbjarnason said over coffee late one afternoon. "When Decode was started, three years ago, I was elated. The problems arose when they came up with this database. It ignores the rights of privacy, and patients' rights. It will turn Decode into a scientific monopoly. Society is now so dominated by profit. It's not about science anymore, it's about money."

From the beginning, Icelandic scientists have wondered how they will compete for research dollars with a company that has access to all the essential genetic information that the country can offer. They complain that Decode is about to receive what the highly respected population geneticist Einar Arnason described to me as "the greatest handout in the history of this supposedly competitive business of scientific research. If you forget the bad science it will encourage, you can think about this: Iceland gets a few hundred mostly technical jobs; Decode stands to earn billions of dollars, maybe more. Sound fair to you?"

Of all the questions that have surfaced since the database plan was first proposed by the government, however, none is mentioned as frequently or with as much emotion as the privacy issue. Many people fear that any such database—which will contain a staggering collection of highly personal information on every individual in Iceland—

could be invaded and misused with ease. Critics also fear that as time goes on, and the map of the human genome becomes clearer, this personal information will become even more valuable—and subject to abuse—than it is today.

Stefansson dismisses these concerns as pettiness on the part of a small-minded medical community. “Our right to develop medicine does not come free,” he told me. “We have a moral obligation to do what we can to move forward. There are opposing needs: to protect privacy and to push science forward. There are times when they clash. Medicine today would simply not exist if privacy was the only need, the only right that anyone ever considered important.”

Stefansson has always maintained that an exclusive contract was necessary to raise enough money to do the job, and he promises that Icelandic researchers can use the data without charge as long as they are not collaborating with a competing firm. “I just don’t have the money to construct this database if somebody else can wait till we are done and then come along and take the rights to it,” he said, adding that the plan simply wouldn’t work if all two hundred and seventy thousand Icelanders have to give consent for each experiment Decode hopes to carry out. That reverses the usual rule of informed consent; it assumes that people are research subjects unless they specifically request exemption; currently, though, in the endometriosis study and in many others, each person working with Decode has to agree in writing to do so.

WmHamilton

“Can we get back to you? He seems to have stepped away from his trousers.”

• •

By the time I arrived in Reykjavik, a month before the decisive parliamentary vote to create the healthcare database, the quarrels between Stefansson and his opponents, which had come to include most of the nation’s research community, were constant, ugly, and very public. What had begun last spring as a political deal that would have passed without debate had suddenly become the most contentious issue in Iceland. After a few initial phone calls to scientists, I was deluged with E-mail from people who wanted to tell me about the poisons in Stefansson’s plan—and in his soul. A Web site devoted to fighting the plan had appeared. No day passed without a depth charge being tossed into the newspapers. While I was in Reykjavik, and after I left, each side called me often to report the lies, plots, and scientific inadequacies of the other.

“Kari Stefansson shoved this bill down our throats,” said Eirikur Steingrimsson, a molecular biologist at the University of Iceland whom Stefansson described to me as the most brilliant young scientist in Iceland. “That is what we object to the most. If he had done this the correct way it would have been over with already. There would not have been any opposition.” Steingrimsson said he was particularly offended by the implied notion that Decode would become the de-facto funding center for Icelandic genetics. “There is no way on this earth that I am going to Kari Stefansson to apply for my funds,” he said.

Stefansson had campaigned for months on behalf of the database plan, appearing almost without pause on television and radio. In December, the week before the final vote in the Althing, he decided—“as much as it’s agonizing for an impulsive man like me to keep his big mouth shut”—that he would no longer defend himself even from the many personal charges being made against him. After I left Reykjavik, he told me, over the phone, “The people still support me and the doctors think I’m the Devil. So it’s time to just let the future happen.”

As the vote neared, the emotional nature of the debate spread along the Internet, through the world’s close-knit genetics-research community. Richard Lewontin, a professor of zoology and biology at Harvard, suggested publicly that “a boycott of scientific coöperation with Iceland might be an appropriate measure if this bill is passed,” but nobody rushed to support him. Many researchers, even some who believe the plan has merit, felt troubled. They say that once the database is approved it will be as if an arrow had been shot into the void: nobody can guess where the process might lead.

“We are not just talking about creating a market for Iceland’s DNA,” I was told by Henry T. Greely, who is a professor of law and a co-director of the Program in Genomics, Ethics and Society at Stanford. “This isn’t fish or lamb’s wool we are dealing with here. This

FASHIO
ZONE

"It comes in midnight gray, charcoal gray, slate gray, and gray."

• •

particular product is the spirit of the human species, and before Iceland turns its DNA into a commodity—and one that they may not even earn their fair share of money from—I just hope they know what they are doing."

Support for the health-care database from Prime Minister Oddsson was essential. Yet, after voicing strong initial belief in its promise, Oddsson became silent. Many people began to believe he was looking for a graceful way to back out of a plan that had become politically sensitive. When I saw him in Reykjavik, however, he quickly made it clear that nothing could be less true.

Oddsson is a contemplative man who writes poetry, considers himself a conservative, and is very popular. "Obviously, this is all about trust," he told me one blustery Sunday afternoon when he was alone, working in his office. "In Iceland, trust is everything. I once saw a documentary about a famous defense attorney. He was asked, 'How do you choose a jury?' He said, 'First, I take out all people who wear bow ties—because they are not likely to be part of a team. Then I get rid of everyone of Northern European descent. They are too trusting and they all believe in authority. When the police testify, Northern Europeans and Scandinavians tend to believe they are telling the truth.' At first I was outraged and considered it a complete stereotype. But I sat there and thought about it for five minutes and I realized he was completely right. I happen to be proud of that quality and I think it says something about why we are willing to put ourselves forward and make this database work. It's not just the dangers that deserve to be considered but the possibilities for good—for Iceland and maybe for humanity. I know the doctors are very angry. And I wish they weren't. But many of their complaints just aren't valid. We could have passed this bill six months ago after a day of debate, but we wanted to hear how it could be improved, and we listened. Even the biggest opponents, if you can get them to calm down, will tell you it's a better bill now than it was in April. But they are not happy, and I suspect some of them never will be. So the question for me is simple: should the doubts and fears of the minority outweigh the seventy per cent of parliament and the sixty per cent of the public who want to do this? We have discussed the plan in our press all year. I doubt any issue in the history of this republic has received as much attention. The response has been clear. Go talk to normal people on the street. Let them tell you what they think."

I took his advice, and made a highly unscientific pilgrimage to the Kringlan Shopping Mall, which, except for its self-described distinction as "the mall at the top of the world," might just as well be in Paramus; it has that familiar mix of chain stores, hamburger joints, and cinemas partial to American films. My survey could never be published in a peer-reviewed, scientific journal, but for anybody who has done this sort of thing in America the outings were revealing: nobody was too busy to answer my questions. Every person knew what I was talking about, and most knew about it in impressive detail. I asked all of them the same questions: Did they support the database, and would they be willing to be listed in it?

Of forty people, two had no answers, two were opposed, because they just didn't trust computers, and two said they needed to think about it. The rest said they would sign up tomorrow. "It is so silly to talk about privacy here," said Thor Palmisson, an engineer. He then took out his wallet and showed me his Visa card, an air-traveller card (for Saga Business Class on Icelandair), and a video-rental card. "Every one of these has my national I.D. number on it," he said. "You can't rent a video without it, and you can't move or get a job. The numbers are easy to figure out. To me, this seems it's all just a giant attack on Kari. What is it that they are accusing him of? Is he trying to get rich? Fine, that's O.K. with me. Is he trying to get famous? I can stand that, too. I have seen him discuss this issue more than once. I don't believe he is motivated by greed. If he takes a few drops of my blood and gets rich curing cancer, that's absolutely fine with me."

The bill passed the Althing on December 17th, by a margin of thirty-seven to twenty (with six members not voting). Instead of ending the battle over the stewardship of Iceland's gene pool, however, the campaign against Decode become even more intense. The legislation was "a totalitarian act which casts a dark shadow over Iceland in the international scientific community," a leftist member of parliament, Hjörleifur Guttormsson, said that day. Overwhelmed by their defeat, critics compared the database project to the Nazi experiments with racial hygiene and the exploitation of poor blacks in the Tuskegee study.

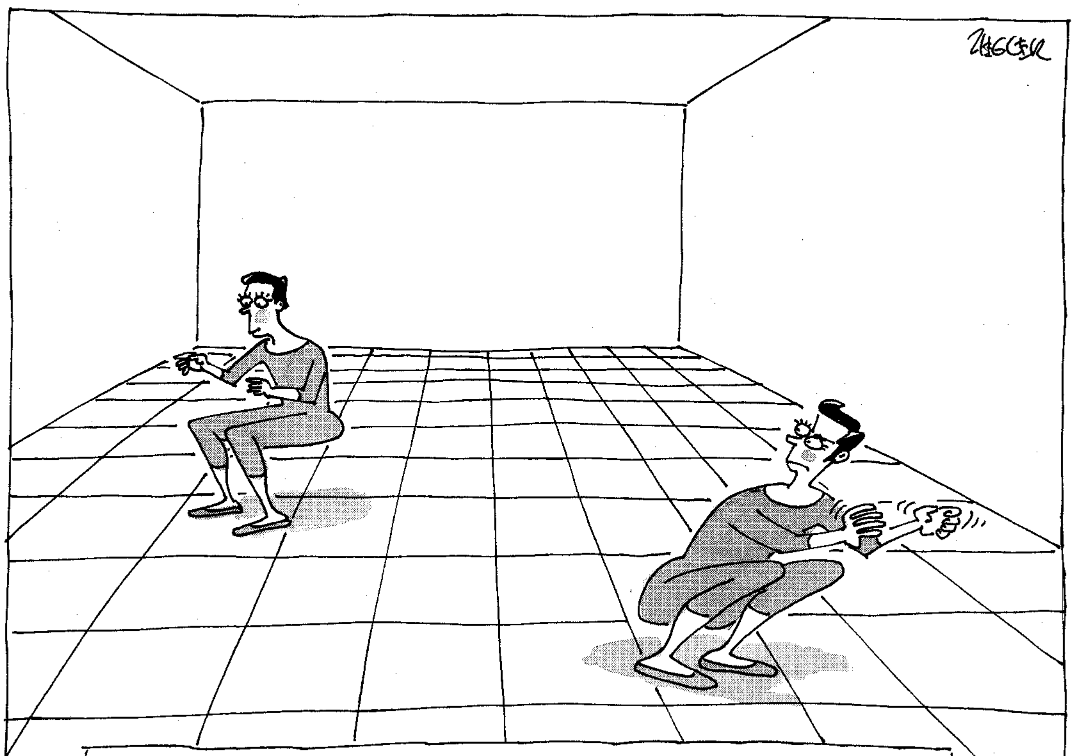
"Anyone who can mention Nazi experiments and this database in the same sentence does not deserve to live in Iceland," Stefansson told me on the telephone as the opposition rhetoric veered out of control. Earlier, I had asked him if he ever regretted his decision to come home. "Not for a minute," he replied. "This happens to matter more than any of us do." Lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he went on, "You know, my brother is schizophrenic. I am not saying that that is what motivates me. It isn't. But, of course, it is there, hovering in the background. And I always know it. I can never know whom it will affect. Maybe my son, my cousin, a grandchild. You can't know that. It's a barbaric truth."

He went on to say, "I need to convince everyone I was not given a gift. I know that. But look at it logically. Should the government run this database or should private enterprise? Let's assume that the government has no idea how to create value from an enterprise like this. That is my assumption—after all, I did not spend fifteen years at Milton Friedman's university for nothing. . . . So does the government have the right, after I put this together, to hand it over to somebody else? Yes, technically it has the absolute right. But this is my intellectual property."

STEFANSSON will spend at least the next six months negotiating with the government over the terms of the license. During that time, he will have to improve his relationship with many people he has alienated in the past year: scientists in Iceland are already threatening legal action on the ground that the bill offers Decode an unfair monopoly and that it violates human rights in its use of research subjects. Stefansson understands that he will need full coöperation from Iceland's physicians, too. The database will need accurate information—on patients, their diseases, symptoms, medications, and treatments—or it will be useless. "But don't forget the possibilities here," Stefansson said on the day the bill passed. "This fails. We go bankrupt. We lose money. Our investors lose, too. Or possibly we barely make it. Or maybe we make a fortune. There are real risks. And the people who criticize me—they have absolutely no idea what they are talking about. None."

The fact is, however, that many of them do. The field of genomics will certainly grow rapidly, and not much imagination is required to see how genetic information could be misused. To take one obvious concern, should insurance companies or employers have the unfettered right to purchase data that tell them who is most likely to die from coronary-artery disease or cancer at an early age? That isn't a problem in Iceland, where access to healthcare is guaranteed, but it would be in most countries. And what about a genetic trait that increases the viral abilities of H.I.V.? Or makes you more likely to become an alcoholic or addicted to drugs? Stefansson's research into longevity is novel and exciting, but if Decode discovers genes for longevity most insurance companies would be eager to know who has them. What if it turns out that you don't?

"None of these questions can be answered," Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Iceland's recently appointed Surgeon General, said. "I have done loops in the air all year long. And it has been painful. Of course there are serious dangers. Is it scary? Very. But we have to find a way to make this happen. The benefits just outweigh the problems. It doesn't mean there are no doubts. We are walking into a new world. But I don't think it is wild to say this may turn out to be a tool like none other. And I don't think this country can just sit here and say, Nope, sorry, we are going to stand on rules that existed in a different era for a different world." In the end, Gudmundsson, like many others who are just as thoughtful and just as anxious, believes that that would be the most foolish risk of all. ♦



THE GOOD TEEN-AGE MIME CHOOSES TO STUDY FOR AN EXAM, WHILE THE BAD ONE CHOOSES TO STEAL HUBCAPS.

PERSONAL HISTORY

NAKED ON THE GRASS

The author recalls his mother's deathbed confession.

BY JAY McINERNEY

MOST love stories, like most fortunes, begin with a crime. It's been years since I heard one that involved only two people, and I've come to think of betrayal as a corollary of bliss. When my mother, on her deathbed, told me her own secret love story, my wife had just left me for another man, and my father was sleeping in the next room. My mother was known as a giver, a doer of good works. A center for children is named after her. Her priest still refers to her in his sermons. I think that, by confessing her sin to me, she hoped to reverse the process of canonization and become more fallibly human in death than she had seemed while she was among us. She was tired of being a saint.

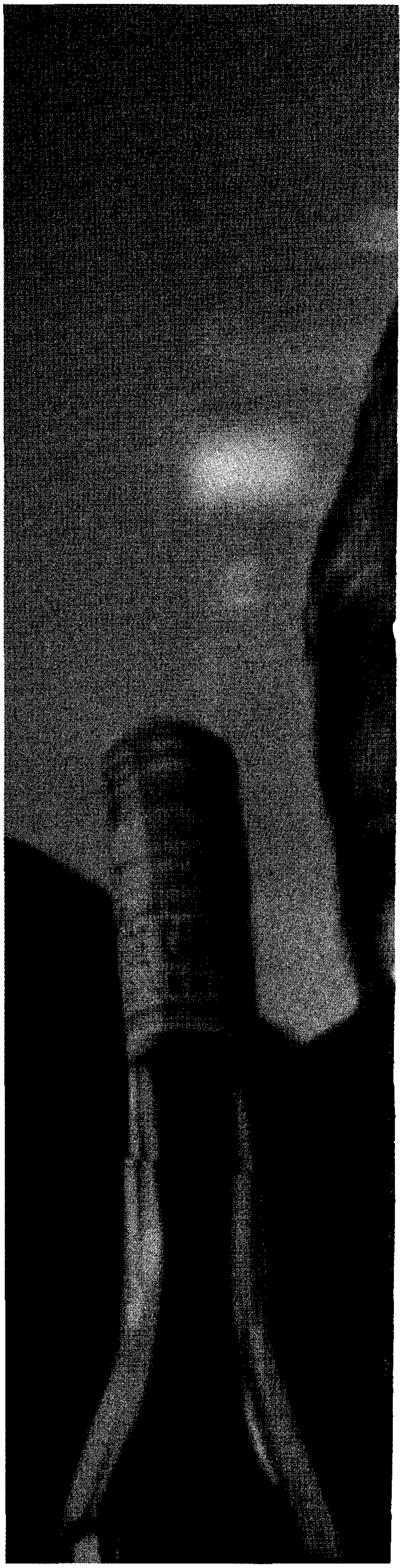
After years of trying not to think about her, I now find it difficult to conjure up my mother in all her vivacity. I locate her indirectly: through a smell or a sensation—the premonitory prickle of chill on my bare arms on a late-summer night. For her sake, I hope the afterlife takes place outdoors. She loved dogs, woods, snow, long stretches of blue water stippled with whitecaps, practical jokes, and picnics. She disliked gum chewers, hunters, self-promoters, cosmetics, public displays of affection, and dark, airless rooms. "It's such a nice day," she would tell us. "Why don't you go outside and play?" It became a ditty that my brother Chris and I would repeat in mockery: "Such a nice day, go out and play."

I was a mama's boy for the first twelve or thirteen years of my life. There was no one whose company I preferred to hers, and we tended to rely on each other for companionship—my father was always at the office or on a plane to Pittsburgh or Cleveland. In the winter, I was sometimes allowed to skip school to go skiing with my mother. In the spring and fall, it was sailing. This was when our unspoken conspiracy against my father started: no need to let him in on our little secret—he might not understand, she implied. And together we persuaded him not to send me off to prep school—a fate that befell both of my younger brothers, Chris and Mark.

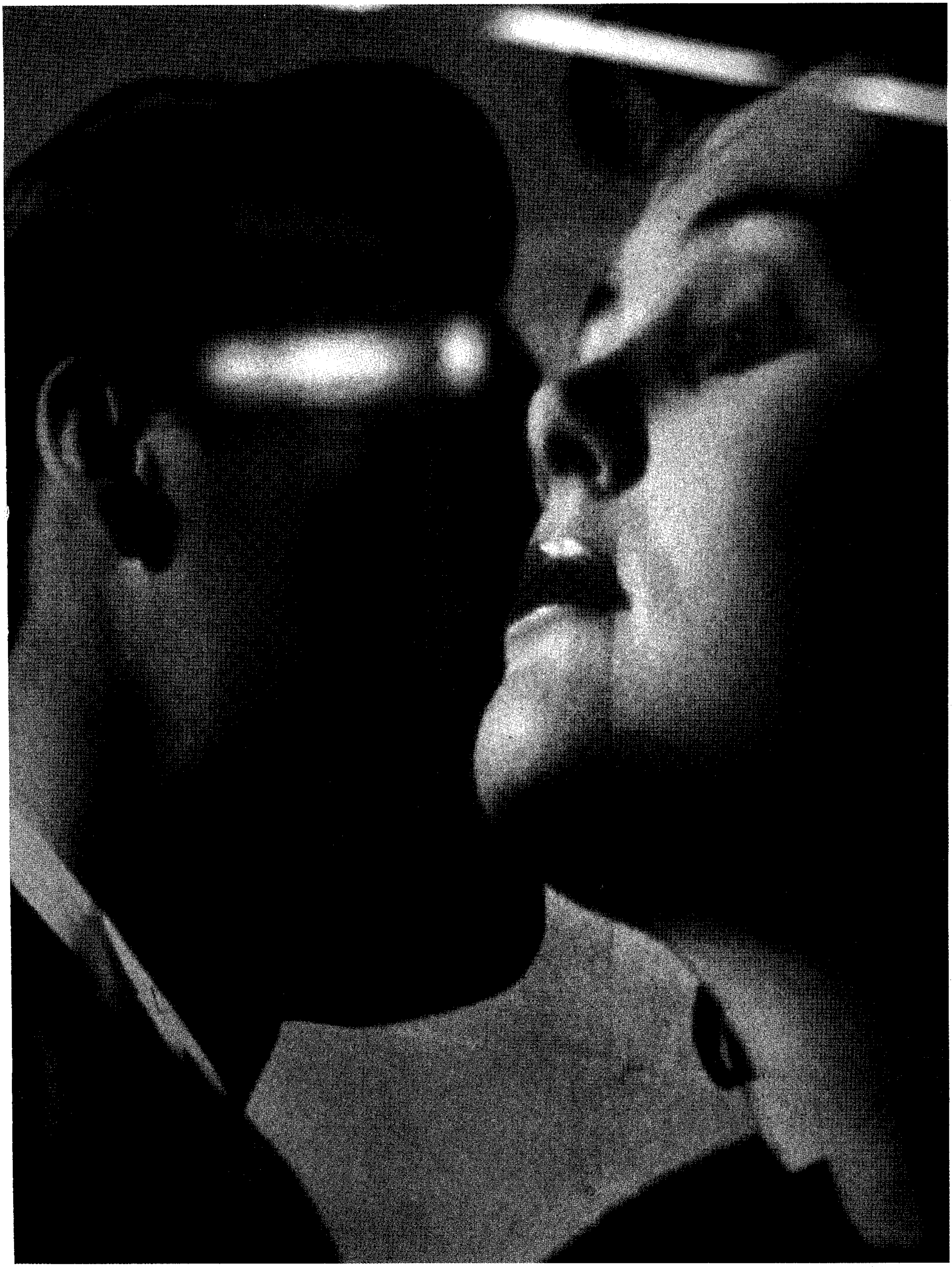
MY mother was a firstborn, like me. She was the bright, fair-haired daughter of parents who had left the Irish Catholic ghetto of South Boston for the Wasp nest of Newton. Valedictorian of her class, captain of the field-hockey team, and president of the ski club, she went on to Middlebury College, where she was elected president of the student union. (It must have been discouraging to follow such an act; her younger, darker sister specialized in truancy, makeup, and cigarettes and eloped at eighteen with a high-school dropout who later made a fortune selling Subarus.)

My mother was a tomboy who grew up playing baseball, and it was only natural that her given name, Marilyn, was more or less dropped in favor of the boyish Merf, from Murphy, her last name. Tall, blond, and less voluptuous than the ideal of her day, she possessed the kind of wholesome beauty that reminded many—until she opened her mouth to sing—of Doris Day. She liked her body because it was athletic, but she had very little consciousness of her sexual currency, and little interest in enhancing it. She was prudish even by the standards of the time, and I doubt that the men who courted my mother fantasized about her wearing black lingerie or talking dirty, but quite a few imagined her as a wife.

"I feel gypped," she told me the night before she died, curling her fingers into a pitifully weakened fist. "Girls weren't supposed to like sex. And, God



It was the seventies. Nixon w



MARTHA ROSLER, "SUBWAY STATION, FRANKFURT" (1983)/GORNEY BRAVIN AND LEE

ing down. Saigon was falling. Marriages were cracking up. Everywhere my mother looked, the message was "Go for it."

knows, I didn't. I loved your father and I wanted to make him happy, but I was doing it, you know, for him. I just gritted my teeth the first night. It was years before I started to enjoy it. And then it was almost too late." "Almost" turned out to be the significant word.

I didn't know what to make of these confessions. I was astonished and, at first, embarrassed. My mother and I had never talked about sex. But modesty was not a luxury available to her now. I had just carried her back from the bathroom, where I had lifted her nightgown up over her hips for her. Now, at the end, her old inhibitions seemed ridiculous to her.

"You're so lucky," she said, "being a boy and growing up when you did. They really screwed us up back then. Goddamned son of a bitch!" My mother had only recently started swearing—since she had become ill, really—and she wasn't very good at it. Her rhythm was off. She was like someone with a mild case of Tourette's, but the anger was genuine.

MY father was also a Catholic, although he could have passed for a Wasp. Like my mother's father, my paternal grandfather had prospered and suburbanized his South Boston Irish family, and my father had grown up five miles from Merf, though they didn't meet until both had finished college.

He was the handsomest man she had ever seen—almost too handsome. Like his elegant banker father, he had a touch of the dandy: he was known to wear spectator shoes in summer and red vests in winter. He had a slightly remote, abstracted air that I have observed in other flawlessly handsome men. You often got the sense that he wasn't quite there in the room with you.

For four weeks after they met, on a blind date, he called her every Thursday night, by which time she was long since booked for the weekend. Three other young men were competing for her attention, and two had already proposed. She fended them off, waiting for my father to phone. Finally, she held a weekend open for him. A few weeks later, he proposed.

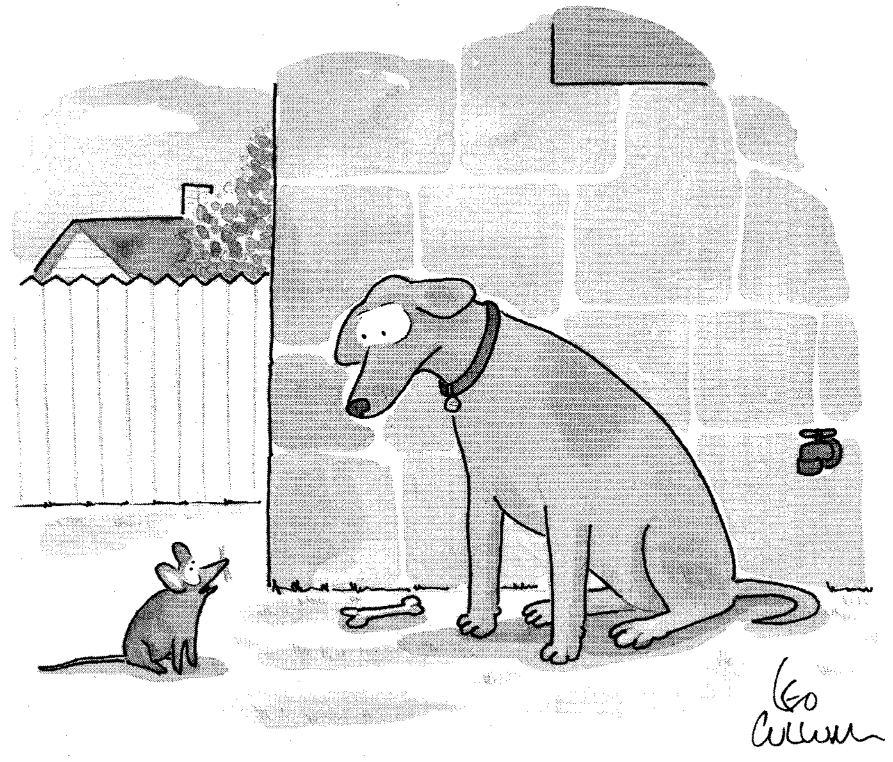
Within days of my parents' engagement, Scott Paper, the company my father was working for, transferred him to Hartford, and that's where I was born, ten months after the wedding. Less than a year later, he was transferred to Manchester, New Hampshire, and then to London, England, and so on. It became a pattern.

In 1969, when I was in the ninth grade, we moved from Vancouver to a town I'll call Buxton, Massachusetts—my tenth such move in fourteen years. (The names here—apart from the members of my family—have been changed.) I think my mother was nearly as sick of it as my brother Chris and I were—leaving old friends, making new ones. Asserting herself, she rejected the house that my father had selected for us in town and found instead a rambling lakeside Tudor in the thin suburban belt just beyond the small city. At least there she would have the consolation of sailing and water-skiing in the back yard.

BUXTON, originally a mill town, depended by then on a giant General Electric plant to employ many of its blue-collar inhabitants and replenish its country-club set with transferred executives. We arrived in town shortly before a series of layoffs started, and I watched the town shrink as I grew up, the jobs moving south or overseas. But there were no portents of decline when my parents first met Wick and Charlotte Millbrook, the most glamorous couple in town. My parents were attractive and widely travelled, and the Millbrooks saw them, it occurs to me now, as the urbane companions they deserved. Both couples had children close in age, and within a year we were celebrating Christmas and Easter together.

Wick's forebears had been among the founding families of Buxton. Wick had met Charlotte, then a student at Simmons College, on a blind date, when he was still studying law at Harvard. A refugee from a Midwestern Catholic family, Charlotte slouched to minimize her height—almost six feet in her flats. Her nervous, angular "Walk Like an Egyptian" way of moving barely disguised her towering beauty. Wick was six-five, Charlotte's ideal dance partner, although no one ever doubted her when she said that she'd had to lead during their first waltz. Wick's mother, I eventually learned, had been fierce and dominating, so Charlotte's authoritarian aspect must have seemed comfortably familiar.

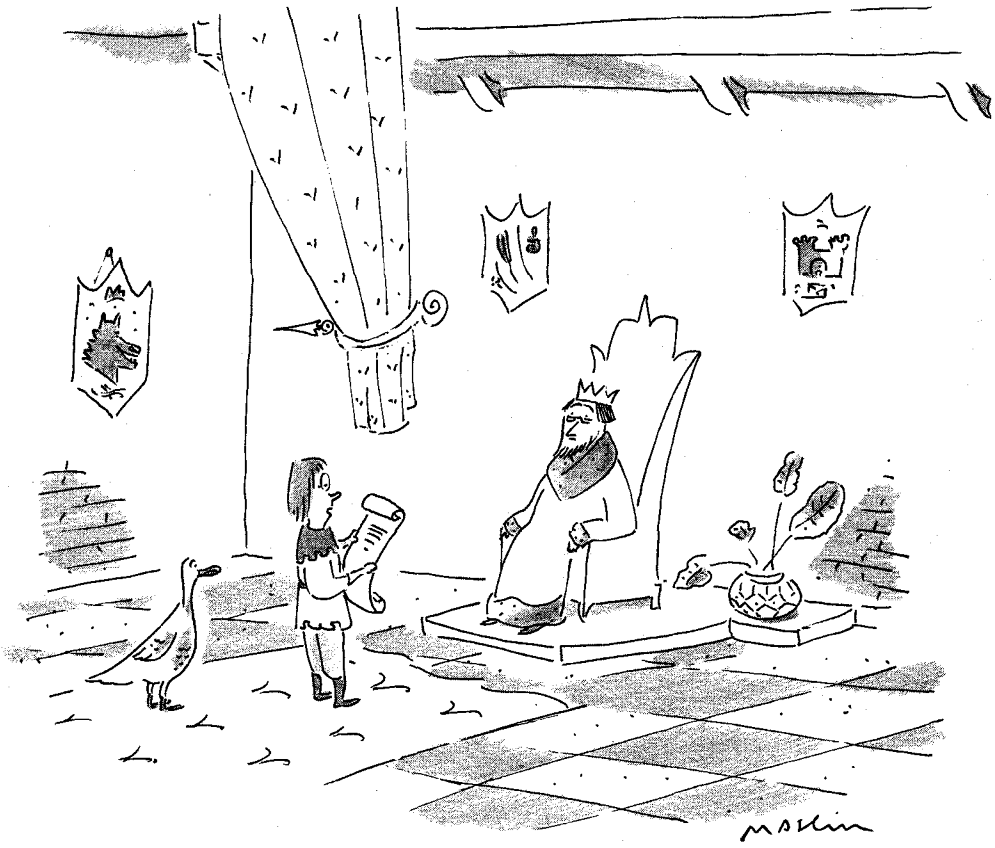
After graduation, they got married, at the Williams College chapel. They bought a Greek Revival mansion nearby, and restored it with scrupulous



"Remember, the enemy of your enemy is your friend."

fidelity. Wick was taken on by a local law firm, and Charlotte threw herself into the social life of the community. She was now rich, by her standards and by those of Buxton, and seemed driven to take advantage of the many opportunities previously denied her.

By the time we arrived, the Millbrooks' Christmas parties had become legendary for their extravagance—there was one on Christmas Eve, which included the children, with puppet shows or magicians, as well as a brunch the next day. Charlotte started planning weeks in advance and was often exhausted for days afterward. Delicacies were conjured from distant cities, and many of the elaborate ornaments and wreaths were handcrafted by the hostess. Every year, there were more Spode Christmas-tree plates—dozens and dozens—unshelved for this one occasion. The napkins were linen, the flatware was sterling, the liquor was top-shelf: Chivas, Bombay, and Stolichnaya. Wick would make pitchers of his famous deadly milk punch. This at a time when a plate of Ritz crackers with Cracker Barrel cheese constituted a fête.



"The Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs is proud to announce she's now laying two additional lines of eggs: Silver and Platinum."

It was at the Millbrooks' house that I saw my first Brie—the thin end of a wedge of sophistication which eventually replaced Scotch-and-soda with white-wine spritzers, iceberg lettuce with romaine, and Thousand Island dressing with vinaigrette. We all followed the Millbrooks down this road: by 1972 cheddar was practically extinct in our part of the world. But the cheese was still served before rather than after dinner, even at the Millbrooks', and their Continental habit of serving the salad after the main course never caught on. Is it my imagination or did extramarital sex arrive at about the same time as the Brie? The first divorce in this circle was roughly contemporary with the new *fromage*.

Buxton was no more provincial than most American communities; thirty years ago, the Millbrooks would have seemed dazzlingly cosmopolitan almost anywhere outside New York. All the towns we'd lived in, during those years, formed a kind of continuous postwar suburb, with brand-new "Colonial" houses where World Book Encyclopedias dominated bookshelves and pretty seascapes of Provincetown hung above sofas—that lost world of tuna casseroles and bridge clubs and whiskey sours, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass playing on the commode-style cherry-veneer stereo and Lawrence Welk on the rabbit-eared TV.

The Millbrooks had more books than I'd ever seen, overflowing their shelves and spilling out onto tabletops, real books—poetry and history and art books the size of TV trays. They collected art: late Abstract Expressionists, Rauschenberg, and Jim Dine. There was a painting that I thought was a Picasso oil study for "Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe," after Manet's famous painting. In this rendition, unlike the Manet original, there was effectively only one couple, and the man, too, was nude. I remember being thrilled and appalled by the nudity, trying to interpret the interaction between the two primary figures. Were they about to have sex? Had they just had sex? Until I saw Manet's original, I didn't know about the missing male figure. I've since learned that the painting wasn't a Picasso, and it's possible that this memory was constructed after the fact—that I superimposed a painting I encountered later in life onto the story of my mother's first illicit tryst, which was also a picnic on the grass. In any case, the so-called dirty pictures on the Millbrooks' walls were a source of consternation in some quarters. But I knew better, and the Millbrooks did as much as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones to shape my growing scorn for my middle-class upbringing.

"I'VE just met five women who introduced themselves as your mother's best friend." My third wife, Helen, was at her first Buxton cocktail party. My mother, whom she'd never met, had been dead for twelve years. "And they all used the word 'saint' to describe her."

"Now you see what I mean," I said. Merf was not a politician, but she had a quality of perfect sympathy. She also had a gift for interrogation, for getting everyone's life story—with the result that any number of people walked out of our house a little taller, as if they were about to become the subjects of biographies. Naturally, they came back.

No one was so fierce in claiming my mother's friendship as Charlotte. Like most interesting friendships, theirs seemed unlikely. They looked enough alike to be sisters—tall, rangy, and Hibernian. Even more so after Charlotte started dressing my mother and advising her on her coiffure. My mother, who was six or seven years older than Charlotte, willingly played the younger sister, indulging Charlotte's need to dominate, because she recognized the larger neediness behind it. Charlotte never tired of trying to interest Merf in cooking, English furniture, and American painting, but in the end she was probably surprised and grateful to discover that Merf could love her without these things.

Also, Charlotte needed someone to talk to. She was always complaining about Wick—about his absent-mindedness, his passivity, his inability to make money fast enough. I can't imagine Merf responding in kind—she would have considered it disloyal and self-indulgent—although her marriage was less perfect than everyone assumed. In the mid-seventies, when even Buxtonites were signing up for est, my mother retained an old-fashioned view of privacy. And, at some point, candor became impossible for my mother, because she was falling in love with Charlotte's husband.

It was something of a joke around town that if you needed to find my mother at a cocktail party you simply had to look for Wick's head, towering above the crowd and beaming like a lighthouse. He was so obvious about his affection for her that it seemed almost ridiculous to think that anything sub rosa could be going on. Not that there was much doubt about the state of the Millbrooks' marriage. One morning, I woke to hear that they'd had a fight in our living room the night before. Charlotte had driven off in the car, and Wick had insisted on walking the eight miles home in his tasselled loafers, although it was well below freezing and the ground was covered with snow. My father drove along beside him for half a mile, trying to persuade him to get in the car. But Wick wanted to prove a point.

I was flattered when Wick started to take an interest in me. He was a great reader, and he began to lend me volumes from his library. We talked about poetry and about colleges. And, unlike my father, with whom I argued violently about Vietnam and Watergate, he was a McGovern Democrat, a patrician liberal.

"Does he talk to you?" Charlotte would ask me, shrilly, as Wick grinned at the other end of the table. "He doesn't talk to me. It's like living with a damn statue."

"Say something!" she would challenge him, in front of a group. To which he would inevitably answer, "What do you want me to say?"

"Do you see what I live with?" she'd ask. We saw. We were all on Wick's side—my parents, his kids. We thought Wick had a fiendishly clever strategy for living with the garrulous and demanding Charlotte, the real genius of it being that Charlotte could never be quite sure whether it was a strategy or a personality. There seemed to me something noble in Wick's passivity. He was a man of few words, but he could be communicative when he chose to be. Which is apparently how he won my mother. For once, the listener had found someone to listen to her.

"HE used to read to me," my mother told me the night before she died. It was time for the morphine, but she wanted to talk. "We'd take a picnic basket and drive to Mt. Greylock, and spread a blanket on the grass." Very crafty of Wick, I thought: for Merf, the big drawback of reading had always been that it was an indoor activity. "And he'd talk to me. I think that was what really got to me. It had been so long since someone had asked me what I was thinking, what dreams I still had for my life. Your . . ." She hesitated, not wanting to name the injured party. "It had been so long since your father had talked to me."

She talked to Wick about her wavering faith. She was having a harder and harder time accepting the Catholic teachings on the role of women. One imagines Wick, a casual Episcopalian and a suitor, encouraging her skepticism. Among the poets he chose to read on those outings were the champions of carpe diem—Herrick and Marvell and Omar Khayyám.

A lifetime's prudishness isn't shed overnight. When I was fourteen, Merf discovered a hard-core novel under my bed called "Memoirs of a Whoremaster"—a graphic and gratifyingly encyclopedic account of the range of human sexual behavior. And what a range it was! There was virtually no filler—

A HYPERBOREAN

Ruined temples. Poetry. Zbigniew Herbert,
The inside of your head was a littered Delphi
Where satellites and eagles sailed in orbit
Above the god's besieged hill sanctuary
And the oracle was the one thing still uncensored,
The *via sacra* a *via crucis* partly
And partly actual stone, the untransfigured
Hill itself. You were a Hyperborean,
One of those at the back of the north wind
Whom Apollo favored and kept going back to
In the winter season. And among your people you
Remained his herald whenever he'd departed
And the land was silent and summer's promise thwarted.
You learned the lyre from him and kept it tuned.

—SEAMUS HEANEY

no tedious narrative preliminaries or romantic filigree to interfere with the business of stroking, sucking, and fucking.

I can't remember her ever being quite so angry at me. I could tell the moment I arrived home from school. Her responses to my delicate inquiries about her day were clipped and brittle. Finally, she said, "Read any good books lately?" (Sarcasm was not her mode.) She took the paperback out of a drawer in the kitchen—Exhibit A—and held it up by a corner, as if it carried a disease. I was mortified. It was a filthy book and I was appalled to think of my mother reading it, and especially to think about her thinking about me reading it. But I was also taken aback by the depth of her anger. Her later discovery of a bag of pot in the pocket of my jeans, ugly though that was, was nothing by comparison. It was as if I'd betrayed her personally. She could hardly look at me for days. Normally, it was my father's wrath I feared—he represented the law of the land, riding in from time to time like a circuit judge; my mother was like one of those hip teachers who identify with the students more than with the administration. Obviously, she had trouble accepting the nascent sexuality of her firstborn, but later I wondered if the vehemence of her reaction reflected guilt over her own illicit behavior.

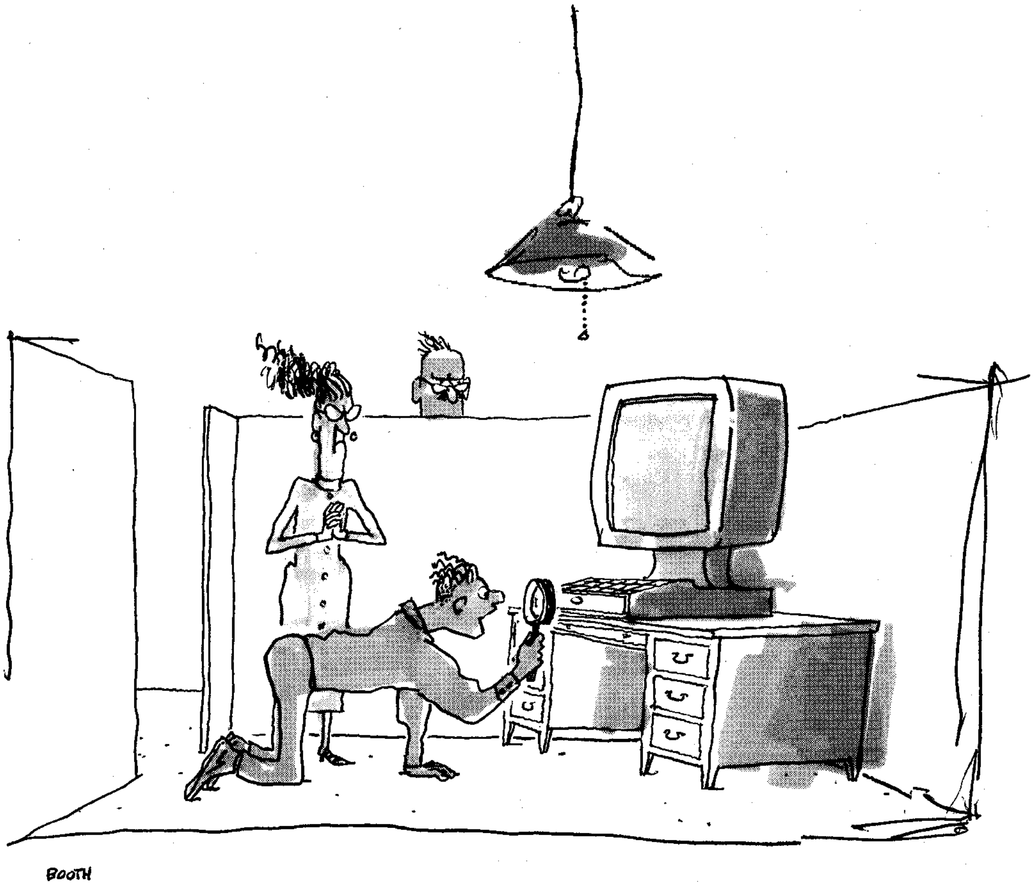
"Memoirs of a Whoremaster" was theory; Courtney Bates was practice. Courtney was a family friend of the Millbrooks, who had come up from Florida in the summer of '71 to babysit for the children—Wick, Jr., who was ten, his eight-year-old sister, Jody, and their three-year-old brother, Tyler. Courtney was an older woman—sixteen to my fifteen. My mother approved of her because she was outdoorsy. My brothers and my friends approved of her because she was pretty and blond and she had a body that reminded us of the Raquel Welch poster from "One Million Years B.C.," which hung in my room at that time. Courtney seemed to me to be vastly worldly without being stuck-up. She introduced me to Kahlil Gibran and Ayn Rand and M. C. Escher, and she let it be known early in our friendship that she wasn't a virgin.

We were both looking at colleges the following summer, and a trip to Middlebury, my mother's alma mater, was approved, on the condition that I would stay with her great friend and classmate there, the director of admissions, who would interview us both the following day. After dinner with the director and his family, Courtney said good night and drove to the Middlebury Inn. I waited until the family seemed to be asleep and then sneaked off into the night, leaving a note to the effect that I had risen early and gone for a walk. I think that it had been my intention to sneak back in before daybreak, but in the ecstasy of what followed I lost track of the plan. My interview was scheduled for ten; I woke up in Courtney's room a few minutes after the hour, and arrived at the admissions office some forty minutes late, breathless, unshaven, hung over, and unburdened of my virginity. The interview was not a success.

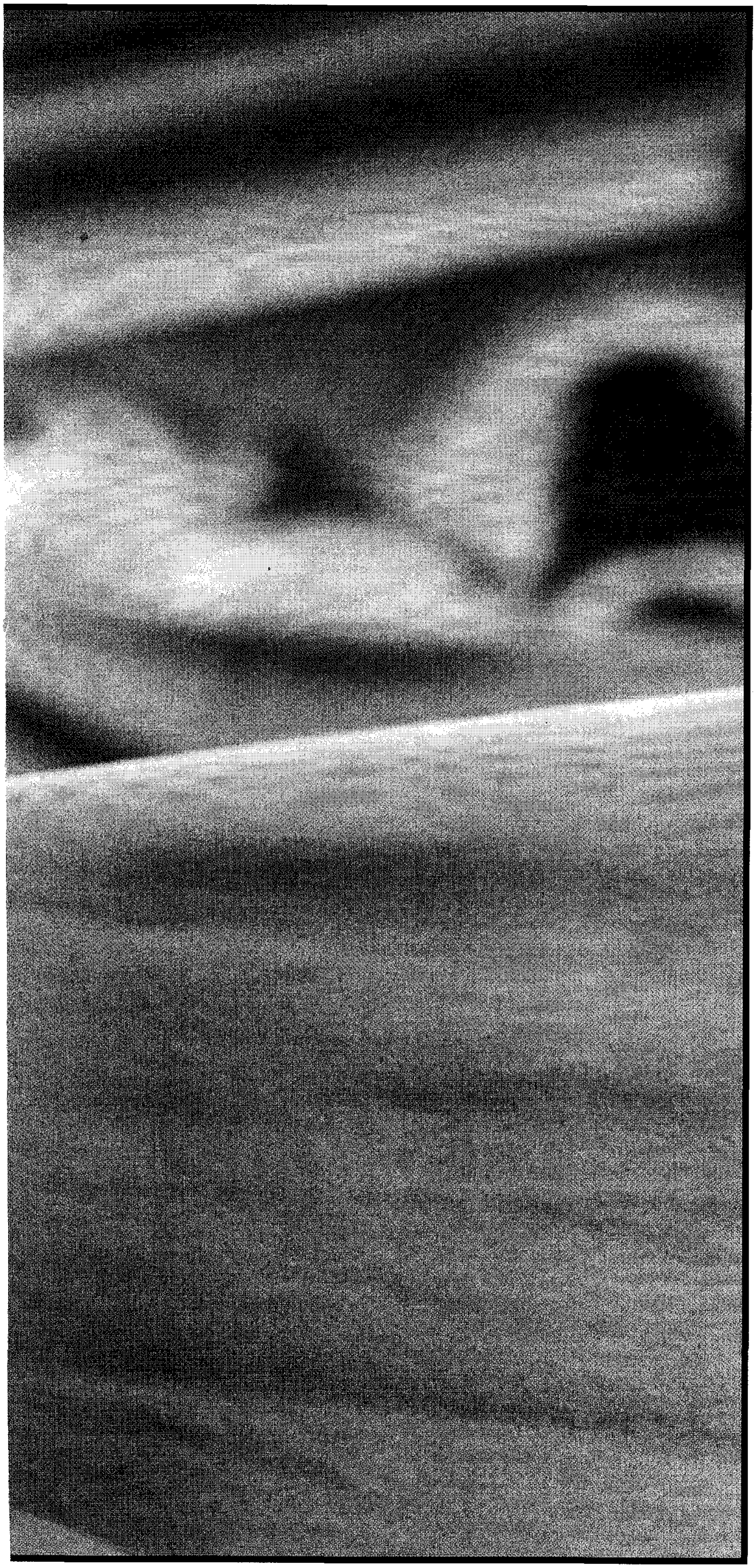
The drive home with Courtney was subdued. I was worried about what I would say to my mother. Even before I had presented my version of events, she could read my sickly smile. The look she gave me made me doubt for the first time that her love for me was infinitely elastic.

It was impossible for me to imagine, of course, that, at the same time, my mother was undergoing an awakening of her own. Even though she wasn't reading Norman O. Brown and Germaine Greer, she was reading *Newsweek*, and she actually attended a women's consciousness-raising group. Nixon was going down. Saigon was falling. Marriages were cracking up. Everywhere my mother looked, the message was "Go for it."

My father told me that she had cried for weeks after I went to college. Soon after that, she stepped up her work with abused children, who were apparently growing in numbers as G.E. cut back jobs and Buxton's economy continued to decline, and she enrolled in a series of courses in social work at U. Mass. It's hard for me to imagine her circulating in that world of poverty and vio-



"'Best if used before 1/1/2000.'"



lence, but she had always been conscious of how lucky she was—noblesse oblige—and this work must have consoled her sometimes. At other times, though, I know she felt like a hypocrite, a sinner doing good.

In the fall of 1973, my father had emergency heart-bypass surgery. My mother optimistically believed that the experience would change him. When he went back to Massachusetts General for a checkup a year later, though, he was working as hard as ever and he had developed a distant stare. Merf was with him, and among the questions the surgeon asked was whether their, ahem, conjugal relations were back to normal.

"All's well," my father answered. My mother didn't say anything, but something in her expression must have tipped off the surgeon, who told my father that there was absolutely no reason, in his case, to avoid sexual activity.

"I'm not suggesting you start swinging naked from the chandelier," he added.

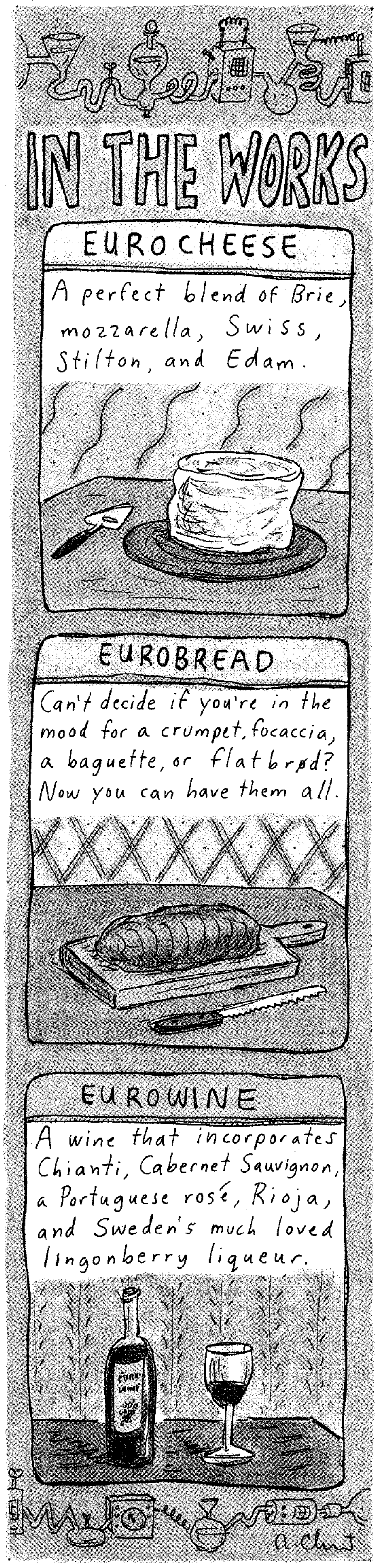
"Understood," my father said.

"I didn't want to embarrass him," my mother told me, on her last night. The old forms and habits of modesty had been intact, although by that time, she said, she had outgrown her distaste for sex. Her timing was terrible, because my father, like many men who suffer cardiac trauma, either had lost his sexual vitality or was afraid to exercise it. Eventually, she consulted the parish priest, who counselled patience. Wick was patient. He'd been waiting for years.

FRESH LOOKS

The photographer François-Marie Banier, a contributor to these pages, balances intimate portraits of such well-known subjects as Vladimir Horowitz, Samuel Beckett, and Princess Caroline of Monaco with equally affecting shots of anonymous passersby, especially children, in the streets of Paris, New Delhi, Madrid, Kathmandu. His new book, "Private Heroes," is the catalogue for a travelling exhibition of the same name (now on view in Germany); it will be published here by Cantz / D.A.P. this summer.

"St. Petersburg, May, 1992"


IN THE WORKS
EUROCHEESE
A perfect blend of Brie, mozzarella, Swiss, Stilton, and Edam.
EUROBREAD
Can't decide if you're in the mood for a crumpet, focaccia, a baguette, or flatbrød? Now you can have them all.
EUROWINE
A wine that incorporates Chianti, Cabernet Sauvignon, a Portuguese rosé, Rioja, and Sweden's much loved lingonberry liqueur.
R. Chast

And he had let her know that he would keep on waiting as long as need be.

One night, a couple of years after my father's operation, she and Wick danced together at a disco, improbably situated in the basement of a former mansion in Stockbridge. On the dance floor, she held his gaze long enough to show him that she loved him and was finally prepared to acknowledge it. That night, she could hardly sleep. Something had happened, was happening. My father was asleep beside her and she felt guilt, but she had made a decision, and the decision was palpably joyful. Once my father had left for work, she called Wick, her voice high and unnatural as she spoke with his secretary. He, too, had been unable to sleep. He had to see her.

Later, standing at the shore of the lake by our house, she sensed that there was a hidden order, a grid beneath the surface of things. Her love was like a decoder ring. It told her that the filaments of desire connected everything to something else. She felt a new affection for all living creatures, even—in fact, especially—for her husband.

NOT believing in illness, Merf didn't believe in regular checkups, and by the time she was diagnosed with cancer, in 1979, it was too far advanced for her to recover, although the doctors held out hope as she suffered through chemotherapy for more than a year—during which Charlotte drove her to a hospital in Boston every three weeks. The fact that she had no vices, that she had been the poster girl for clean living, made her illness all the more inexplicable. Later we learned that although General Electric had essentially abandoned the city, it had left plenty of megatoxic PCBs behind. My father ended his days convinced that industrial waste had killed his wife, but my mother had an unscientific explanation for her cancer: sin.

She tried to shield me, not letting on how ill she was when I called her from Japan, where I was living then. But I returned to the States sooner than I had planned, and took up residence in New York, making the three-hour trip to Buxton—how often? Not often enough, in retrospect. Mom's condition aside, it was depressing to see the shuttered stores and broken windows on Main Street, the defeated shuffle of the shoppers at the Big Y.

I got married, for the first time, on the lawn at home, the date carefully chosen to fall between my mother's debilitating chemo treatments. When my wife left me, four months after the wedding, I went on a long anesthetic binge. Although my mother's illness was ultimately a far greater source of pain to me than the loss of my wife, I tried to shield Merf from the sight of what I romantically imagined to be my own disintegration. She was dying and I was dabbling at killing myself—buying cocaine by the ounce and selling enough to break even, staying awake for days at a time. At one point, a friend dragged me out of the city—they call it an "intervention" now—and I tried to throw myself from the moving car onto the Jersey Turnpike. As a result of this kind of behavior, I nearly missed my mother's death. Finally, my brother Chris called to tell me, with icy fury, that if I wanted to see her alive I had better come home. Relieving my exhausted father and brothers, I stayed with her through the last three nights of her life. Most of what I know about her I learned in those hours.

SHE was almost unrecognizably wasted in the fragile envelope of her papery skin. I was afraid to take her hand for fear the bones of her wrist would break through. But within a few hours I had become accustomed to the awful rituals of deathbed nursing: injecting her with morphine, carrying her to the toilet, putting ice cubes in her mouth.

"Promise me you won't tell me I'm going to get better," she said, the first night, as soon as we were alone. My father and my brothers hadn't quite accepted the fact that she was dying. She wanted her condition acknowledged; she felt that there ought to be some rights appertaining to dying—like candor.

We talked about my failed marriage. She startled me by saying, "I never thought she was right for you."

"Why the hell didn't you say something?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I knew I wasn't going to be around, and I guess I didn't want you to be alone. I didn't really raise you to take care of yourself. Maybe that was wrong of me, but I didn't want you to have to worry about the boring little details of life."

And who's to say that my mother wanted to see me with the perfect woman? I had always believed the cliché—that a mother's love is selfless—but maybe there was something selfish in her love after all, something possessive and competitive. It makes me curiously happy to think so. I remember an oddly carnal atmosphere in the sickroom that night. She suddenly asked me when I had lost my virginity, and the timing could hardly have been accidental: I'd just changed her nightgown.

"What did you say?"

"You heard me. When did you first do it?"

"Jesus Christ, Mom." Out of habit, I almost apologized for taking the Lord's name in vain, but she had stopped chiding me for it.

"Come on," she said. "I'm dying. There are so many things I want to know." She smiled, to show me that the subject was no longer dangerous—but the smile was frightening, a grimace that stretched her cracked blue lips. I dipped a sponge into a big Pyrex bowl beside her bed and moistened them.

"I thought you knew. It was Courtney Bates."

"I thought so," she said. "Tell me about it." She squirmed upward on the stack of pillows propped behind her head, trying to get better elevation. "Who started it? Did she have an orgasm? Was it wonderful?"

"It was great," I said. "That's all you're getting."

"I'm glad," she said. "That must have been neat, starting off with a good experience."

"Yeah, well, you weren't so happy about it at the time."

"No, I wasn't. I was furious."

"So you knew."

"I knew. God, did I know!" She sighed. "What a waste! All the shame, the embarrassment, the guilt. The jealousy, even. All those things they made me feel. It just makes me so damn mad." Her pale face was glowing with anger, the blue veins pulsing beneath her skin. "Did she give you oral sex?"

"Mother, please."

"Come on," she said. "We don't have time for modesty. I mean, what the hell are we waiting for?"

"O.K.," I said. "She did."

"Do you like that?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact."

"How about Gina Grimaldi? Did you sleep with her?"

"Nope."

"No? I could have sworn she was loose."

"So that was why you didn't like her."

"I thought she was putting out for you."

"Putting out?"

"Isn't that the expression?"

It was simple. My mother liked the girls who she thought wouldn't put out for me. She'd guessed wrong on a few of them. "What about Kathleen Quigley?"

"I treated her," I said, "like the good Catholic girl I thought her to be, till I found out she was doing half of the guys in my class. I was crushed. I brooded for a week. Then I invited her out on a date and nailed her."

"I always thought," my mother said cheerfully, "that she was a tramp."

The three nights blur together now. But it was on the very last night, when I relieved my father for the night shift, that he said to her, in parting, "You don't deserve this—you, of all people." Those were probably the last words of his that she heard.

"God, I hate it when he says that," she complained after he left. "He's the good one. I can't even tell him I've lost my faith, and it makes dying so terrible and lonely."

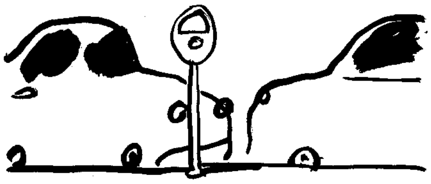
I held her hand, not knowing what to say except "I'm here." It seemed like poor economy to have to deal with the bullshit of Catholicism most of your life and then be unable to collect some righteous peace of mind at the end. A few minutes later, she drifted off into a terrible dream. She scratched and struggled against me. I held her down to the bed, calling out to her, trying to break through. Finally, she was back in the room with me.

"I'm so afraid," she said, searching for help in my eyes.

"You have less reason to be afraid than anyone I know," I said, encouragingly. She knew exactly what I meant: her saintliness.

"Don't say that," she snapped. "I'm so tired of everyone telling me how I don't deserve this. Especially your father. It makes it so much harder. I've done a terrible thing."

She started to tell me how lonely she had been since my father's operation, how difficult it had been to talk to him at the best of times. "I began to feel like I didn't exist. Like I was just the maid and the innkeeper. First you went to college and then Chris and Mark. And I was so alone."



I knew what was coming. I felt that it should bother me or shock me, but it didn't.

Finally she mentioned him by name. The confession was anticlimactic. She talked about the picnic on Mt. Greylock—the *déjeuner sur l'herbe*. She mentioned a stolen day they had spent skiing together in Vermont. If there were any afternoons in roadside motels I didn't hear about them. She never actually told me in so many words that she had had sex with Wick—so, years later, I was able to equivocate with my father and suggest that all I knew for certain was that she had found companionship and poetry with him. But what she told me, unequivocally, was that she had found love.

Given that my wife had just run off with an Italian fashion photographer, it might seem to follow that I'd take my father's side. But, for some reason, I felt complicit with my mother and Wick out there with their picnic basket.

"Do you hate me?" she asked.

"I'm happy for you," I said, and it felt as if I meant it.

She seemed astonished. But I was pleased that she had decided to confide in me. Even if I hadn't approved, I think I would have pretended. Absolution was the only thing I could give her then. It was extraordinary to have to reimagine my own mother after more than twenty years.

Three psychiatrists have tried to convince me that my feelings must have been more complicated than I have admitted. After all, something messed me up enough to make me seek counsel on their couches, to burn through two marriages and half a dozen girlfriends and tens of thousands of dollars' worth of narcotics. "Maybe I just miss her," I said to one psychiatrist, a plumpish young woman, who, in a classic case of transference, was the object of some filthy fantasies on my part. It had already occurred to me, years before, that I probably saw Wick as my proxy in the Oedipal drama.

For my mother's last few hours, before the sun came up, she oscillated between relief and guilt. She was sorry that she had betrayed my father, who, in the end, throughout her illness, had been everything she could have hoped for. But she had known love a second time in her life, and it had to be spoken. She wanted to believe that love might not be such a terrible sin, but she was terrified that she had taken the wrong side of Pascal's wager—that the priests were right about God and his rules. I was sick to think that she had to struggle against her own conscience as well as the disease.

Dawn. She looked calm. She drifted away again; her eyes clouded over and her face was serene. After some time, she squeezed my hand.

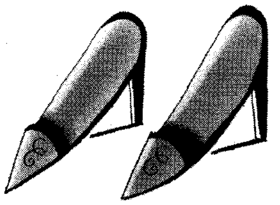
"I was in a wonderful place," she said. She described a landscape that was characterized mainly by brilliant light. "My father was there, and someone else," she said. "The light seemed to be coming from him." She drifted off, then said, "They're waiting for me." I have since read many descriptions of near-death experiences, but I'd never heard of such a thing then. I wish I could say that, like St. Paul when he fell from his horse, I was forever altered. But I wasn't. I do think, though, that my mother found peace at the end.

My father relieved me shortly after dawn. I don't remember how I felt with my new knowledge. In fact, I don't remember him relieving me. The next thing I knew, I was being shaken out of a deep sleep. I went into the bedroom. I thought for a minute that she was already dead: her eyes were glazed and her head drooping on my father's shoulder, so drained of vitality that it was impossible to imagine any further diminution. But then I saw a flutter, a sudden dimming of the eyes.

She was forty-nine years old and I was twenty-four.

We muddled on—diminished, heartbroken, and angry, for the next few years—my father, my brothers, Wick and Charlotte, and I. I don't remember anything about the funeral, although I'm told that I spoke at it. Three whole days are a blank for me except for two incidents: I remember that, on the night of the funeral, I had sex with a member of my extended family on the sofa in the living room. And I remember that, at the wake, Wick sloped around like a bereft Gentle Ben, unable to claim the grieving rights of a lover.

The Millbrooks cancelled their Christmas Eve party that year. They came to our house instead, and our families continued to gather for the next few years. Our Christmas tree that first year had a crooked trunk, and Chris, Mark, and I hung only half the ornaments before we gave up. My father wept intermittently through the night, and we all became weary of the refrain "She was a saint." I ducked upstairs from time to time to do lines. My mother, it was now clear, had been the animating spirit of our Christmas gatherings. The carolling was the first ritual to go as the years passed, then midnight Mass. Finally, one year, long after we had expected the Millbrooks to arrive for cocktails, Wick, Jr., showed up alone, to apologize for his parents. "They're not feeling well," he said, rolling his eyes.



The single and divorced women of Buxton went after my father one by one, and all bounced off like birds flying into a windowpane. He was happy to dine, and to dance, but he would inevitably begin to talk about my mother whenever intimacy loomed. I came to find something heroic in my father's mourning, though I didn't necessarily want to watch him weep into his vodka. He had become softer, and far less judgmental, as if he had taken on Merf's role in our lives.

Wick, on those rare occasions when I saw him, was affectless. "Sometimes I think I'm living with a zombie," Charlotte told me one day. He was sinking into a depression. There was talk of the family's debt, and it soon became evident that the money was gone. He and his law firm mutually agreed that he would leave.

There was worse to come. Wick was prosecuted for tax delinquency. For five years, he hadn't paid his taxes; for two, he hadn't even filed. He pleaded guilty and received a suspended prison sentence and two years of probation—a conviction that would normally result in the loss of the right to practice law. At his disciplinary hearing before the bar, there was a plea for leniency. He had since paid the taxes, and there were "mitigating circumstances": "A close personal friend" had "suffered from terminal cancer," and Wick was described as feeling "responsibility and guilt for the death." According to medical evidence, he had "attempted to expiate his feelings of guilt by failing to file his income tax returns, thus setting himself up to be caught and punished." "On the basis of these facts," Wick received only a public censure and was allowed to continue his legal career. The proceedings were reported in the local newspaper, in enough detail to make it clear to everyone that the friend in question was my mother.

The day after the article was published, my father appeared at my door in Syracuse, looking as if he had been in a fight, his face bruised, both eyes blackened. He had a Rose Mary Woods-style story about his car's having been rear-ended, but I don't think he really expected me to buy it. He slept on my couch for three days. I tried to offer what help I could. Seeing my father in torment, I was ashamed of myself for having taken Wick's part so easily. I had always thought of Wick as a stoic hero, but in his decline and fall he had lost some of his tragic stature. In the courtroom, he had, I felt, betrayed my mother, by using her death as his own defense.

My father felt humiliated and disgraced, but once the cuts and bruises of his mysterious accident had healed he showed more dignity than Wick. He took the blame on himself, concluding that he had failed Merf in some way. He naturally turned for sympathy to Charlotte, his fellow-victim, but after a few months she made it clear that she wanted nothing more to do with our family.

The Millbrooks' Greek Revival house and its acreage were sold to a wealthy couple, who planned to use it as a weekend retreat from New York. The paintings and prints, the furniture, the silver, and the carpets went into storage. Wick opened a private practice, sustained by local clients, whose loyalty tethered him to the environs of his notoriety.

My father died, alone in his bed, two years ago, at the age of sixty-nine. He had no warning, no time to reflect, but we all knew he was ready. "I'm just waiting to join her," he'd said many times. Chris tried to call Charlotte, thinking she might want to come to the funeral, but couldn't reach her. Wick, Jr., now a doctor, drove in from Boston for the service. Chris and I had a final drink with him that night after everyone had left the house. He told us that his sister, Jody, had joined an Evangelical Christian sect and that Charlotte was living alone and working for a museum in New York. "She's still bitter," he said patiently, like someone who has grown accustomed to explaining the behavior of his parents.

A YEAR and a half ago, I attended an engagement party on Park Avenue. I was a friend of the bride-to-be, and I didn't know the hosts, but I was struck by a painting I saw on the wall, an actual Picasso "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe." That night, for the first time in years, I dreamed about my mother. Three days later, I told my wife that I needed to drive up to Buxton one last time.

Not at all certain that Wick would take my call, I phoned his office from a rest stop on the Taconic Parkway. "This is a surprise," he said, without sounding the least bit surprised. He agreed to meet me for a drink at the bar of the former Hilton Hotel, which, he told me, had recently been acquired by a downmarket chain. Arriving early, I walked down Main Street. Three of the four cinemas were shuttered; the fourth was a senior citizens' center. The former Woolworth's store had been subdivided into flea-market stalls. The only shiny new enterprise in the vicinity was the center for children that was named for my mother. On its front steps, a black woman and a fat white woman smoked and glared at me as I paused on the sidewalk.

Wick was waiting at the bar. I was shocked at how little he had changed. His hair was now silver, but otherwise he was still boyish. We chatted awkwardly for a few minutes before I got to the point: "I guess I wanted to ask you about my mother."

He shrugged, as if he had expected this. Although he tried to help me, his answers only reminded me of how vague he had always seemed, and some old sense of decorum, of our former relations as adult and child, prevented me from really pressing him.

"She was a very special person," he said, "and I loved her deeply. It really wasn't very often that we managed to see each other alone."

"Do you think she would have left my father if she hadn't got sick?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I don't think she would have done that for anybody. The idea of family was too important to her."

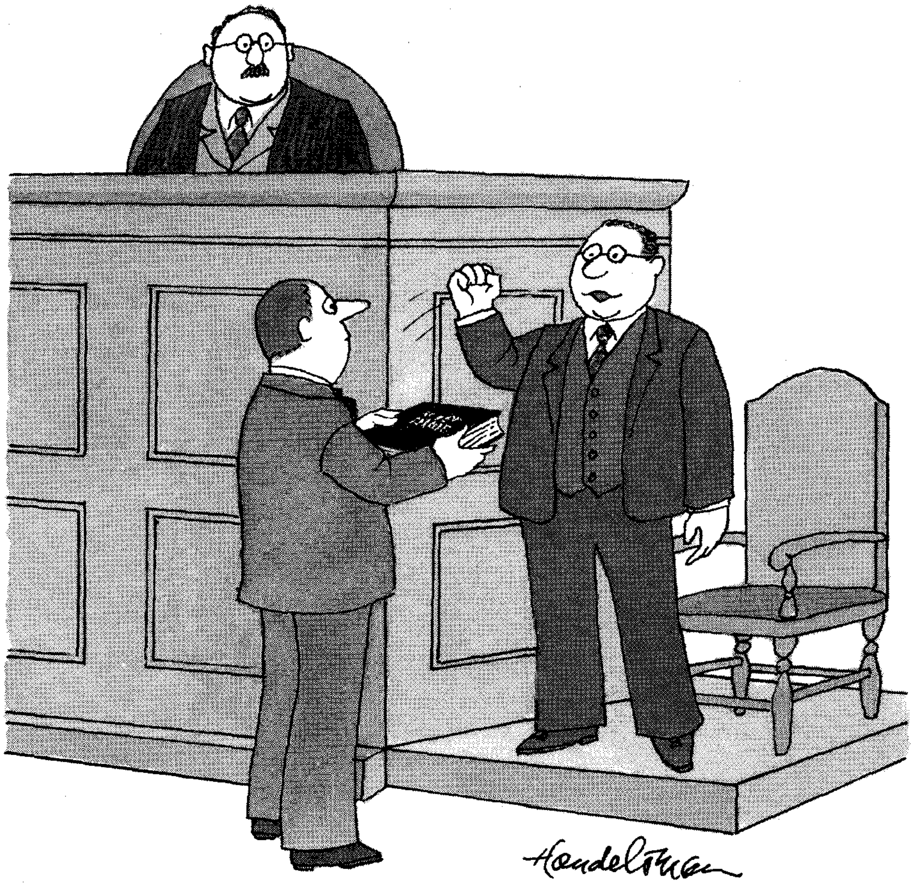
I was surprised by the modesty of the observation. It seemed to diminish the scale of the affair. Somehow, I had imagined Wick's life ruined by my mother's death. That idea answered my sense of justice, both narrative and moral. But Wick had remarried years before. He seemed to have reconciled himself to his past.

"Do you ever miss your other life—the house, the art, the antiques?" I was trying to pierce his composure.

"I'm actually much happier now," he said. He seemed to test this observation in his mind and to find it true. "Life is simpler." He leaned back in his chair. "What about you?"

I'd been waiting for an opportunity to tell him how well I was doing. But suddenly I was unable to summon enthusiasm for the tale of my accomplishments: the family, the big house, books I'd written, paintings I owned. Confronting the history we shared, I was stricken with a sense of vulnerability. I tried to imagine how Wick might have summed up his own existence a few years before it fell to pieces. I had a sudden vision of a smiling man standing at the edge of a cliff, wearing a blindfold.

I'd meant to tell Wick that I was successful and happy. But then I realized that my father, at my age, would have said the same thing. ♦



"Mind if I thump it? I'm a Bible-thumper."

FICTION

THE LAST ONE WAY

An unorthodox divorce.

BY NATHAN ENGLANDER

ELECTROLYSIS promises permanence, and hair killed at the roots. As far as Gitta could tell, in eighteen years of weekly visits not a single hair had been dissuaded from growing. Still, she crossed to the Italian section of Royal Hills each week and lay back on the cracked Naugahyde table in Lili's makeshift salon. Lili would shock and pluck. They would talk. Then Gitta would make her way home, red-faced and tender, the crisp sting of witch hazel humming in electrified pores.

Gitta never expected results. She never blamed Lili, not her stiffening fingers or her boxy outdated machine. Gitta's life was one of infinite patience and unfinished business, an existence of relations drawn out.

Quick she didn't look for, either. The only quick she had known was her *shiddach*. One flit of a date in the lobby of a Manhattan hotel and the next month married. For that bit of economy she had paid with eighteen years of miserable marriage and eighteen years separated, as she waited for her husband, Berel, to grant a divorce. She was like the wife of a lost-at-sea sailor, staring out a window and waiting for news of a sinking. Only a change of heart or a dead body could set her free. Gitta was Royal Hills' *agunah*, its woman in waiting—trapped in a Jewish marriage by loopholeless laws. Not to think that New York State did for her better. A state with no no-fault divorce. She couldn't even get the blessing of the Gentile court. Her reasons weren't prima facie. The judge was not impressed. What more should she have to say than that she didn't want to be married? Idiot rules. No-fault in itself was an idiot concept. Anyone who's experienced will tell you the same: when a marriage fails, always, always there is fault.

Lili, up on the stool, flicked switches. The circular bulb of the magnifying light crackled while the gases fired up and raced around the tube. She pushed the light into place—Gitta's halo. She then witch-hazeled the glass center, witch-hazeled the needle, witch-hazeled Gitta, and leaned in.

"I went to the cabalist," Gitta said, "went to the rabbi. Useless both."

"And who said they'd be useless from the start?"

"Still, I thought," Gitta said. "Better to try them one more time. And such mystical numbers I brought. A cabalist's feast. Married at eighteen for eighteen years. And now eighteen years waiting for a divorce. One second it took to explain. Clear as I'm telling you."

"Easy numbers," Lili said.

"I got the same as they've been giving all along. The rabbi wanting to know if there was someone else, if I'd fallen in love, if, God forbid, I was pregnant. The cabalist, no better. A blessing at the end, much *mazel* and a healed marriage and a houseful of children. He's wishing me children. And me with a hot flash in the middle."

"They're waiting for your husband to die of old age. They'll bring you a divorce when they can trail in the mud off his grave along with it. Enough is enough. If he needs to die for you to live, then see to it yourself." For emphasis, Lili sank in the needle and hit the pedal twice, shock-shocking Gitta and tweezing out the freed hair.

"I picture it done, sometimes," Gitta said. "Berel face down behind the supermarket, drowned in a puddle, or in his apartment with a broken neck, by a broken ladder, an empty fixture hanging from the ceiling, and a light bulb broken in his hand. Accidents. Who would guess? No trail from him to me, from me to you, from you to a husband with a cousin who knows people who do such things."

"It's a simple transaction, Gitta. Berel's life spent to buy back yours. At this point, a fair price to pay."

Gitta pushed away the needle. "Terrible. Terrible talk," she said. "There is still the matchmaker. A saner idea."

"Who's been saying matchmaker from the start? You want business done, do it in a business way. You don't go looking for some rabbi's sympathy, you go to the source. If this guy made the match, let him undo it, and let him know there are more permanent solutions. Trust me, it's not killing but the prospect of killing that gets things done."

"And if it doesn't?"

"Then there is killing. Win-win situation. For once. For Gitta. Win-win."

WHEN Gitta walked out on Berel she was carrying a fresh load of laundry. She stepped out of the building with her arms wrapped around the basket in a hug. Berel had bounded after her. And if he'd screamed for her to stop, to come back, it would have been the first romantic thing he'd ever done. Gitta had turned to give him the chance. All she'd found was Berel's same old expression: Berel grinding his teeth and staring at her with a disgust so passionate and absolute she'd confused it with truth.

She gave him two beats, two passes of a grinding lower jaw. She waited for him to order her into the house, to shout "You'll be back!" or "I'll be buried at your side!"

Gitta put down the basket and drew a sheet from the top, wrapping it around her shoulders like a shawl.

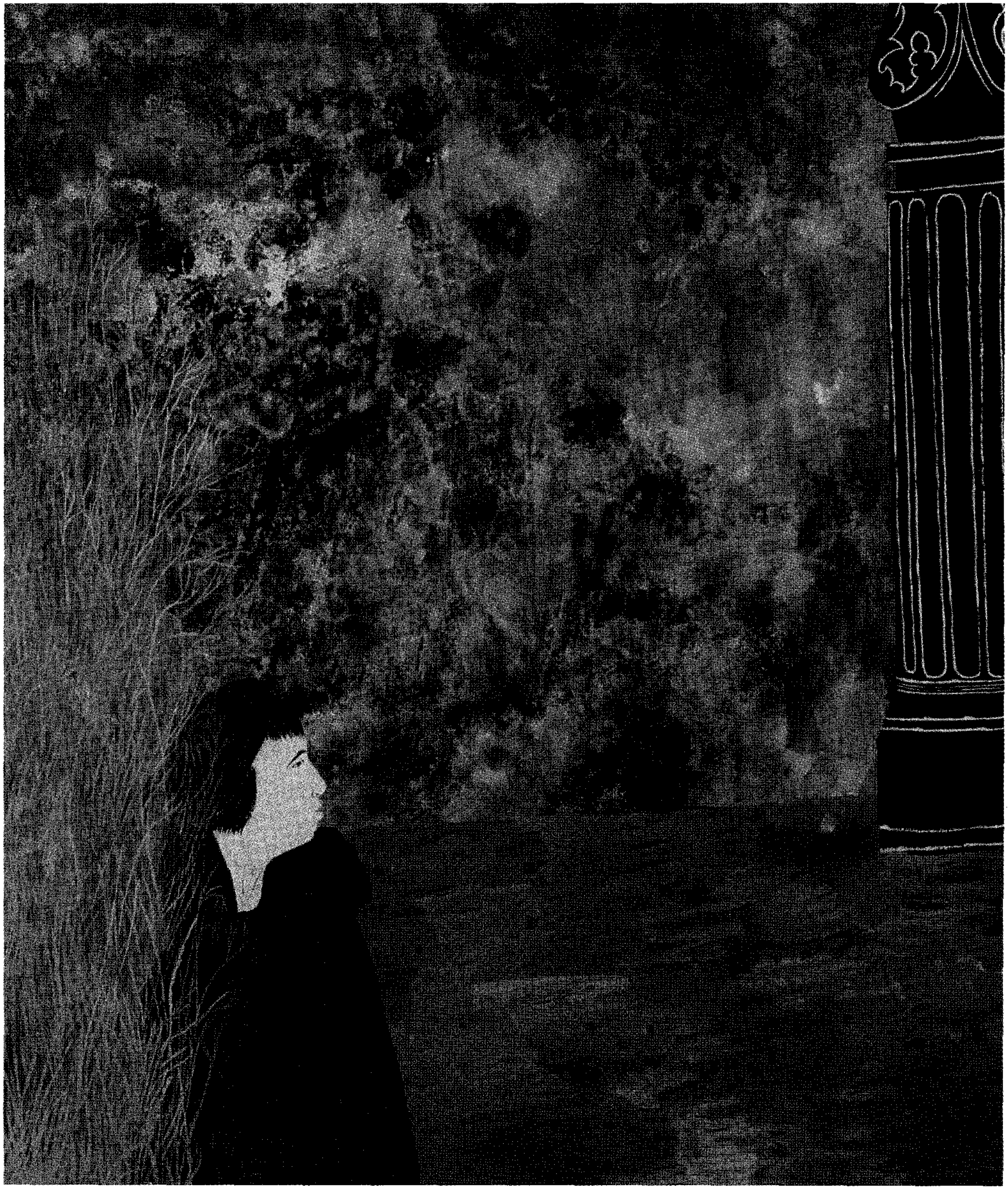
"More love, more comfort, more warmth from the laundry than in half a lifetime under your roof."

Then she left. It was only as she crossed the street that she heard Berel screaming over the wind.

"Neither of us is, Gitta. Neither of us is. But especially you. You are no prize."

No prize, she felt, was possibly true.

DETAIL FROM BEN SHAHN'S "RENASCENCE" (1946)/FRED JONES, JR., MUSEUM



She was trapped in a Jewish marriage by loopholeless laws. Only a change of heart or a dead body could set her free.

But was she so worthless that, simply to remind her, Berel was willing to waste both their lives?

THE matchmaker put down his sandwich and dabbed at his chin. Gitta had interrupted his lunch. Looking at the woman now, Liebman remembered her then. He was a pious man and not one for staring. But the matchmaker, well, he is in a highly specialized field, like the doctor. He is forced to look, to see, with honest eyes.

His memory confirmed what he saw before him: a woman not easy to match.

This was not just a cruel judgment, not because one of her eyes was maybe a little higher than the other and one of her breasts a lot lower. It had nothing even to do with her hirsuteness.

What Liebman could not afford to ignore was her nature. A generous person might pretend not to notice. But it's the matchmaker's job to know. Gitta Floog had always been different, and that threatened everyone. And, for all the unfairness she'd seen in her life, Royal Hills somehow looked upon her thankfully. A sad case, but always someone has to suffer. Better it was Gitta. Somehow, underneath, they thought Gitta got what she deserved.

For this prevailing, unspoken notion Liebman felt worst of all. In thirty-six years of successful matchmaking she was his only *agunah*. And to his only *agunah* he owed his success.

Little Liebman had long trailed Heshel the Matchmaker, begging for a chance to make a match on his own. Heshel, drinking tea one afternoon with all the big *machers*, had called Liebman over, thought it would be funny to give his mascot a shot.

Slurping at his tea, and biting through a sugar cube clamped between rotten teeth, Heshel pulled Liebman onto his knee. "*Shmegegge*," he said, "I've got a job for you. The Floog girl needs a man." And, in the way matchmakers joke privately, he added, "The time has come to cut off her braids and trim down that beard."

Liebman skulked off. He did not fool himself about the task. When he was at a more delicate age his own father used to slap him on the back of the head and tell him to drink some milk, to learn some more Torah. "Not a hair on you and already the girls in your grade have mustaches like they've learned the Gemara once through."

To everyone's surprise, Liebman had married her off—and in one date, yet. Parents began sleeping better, no longer worrying over the boy with the short leg, the girl with the port-wine stain, and, worse, the children with selfishness and anger etched in their eyes. Liebman's business was airborne. For a short while, until the neighbors started whispering about the noise from the newlyweds' apartment and the loveless look to the husband and his head-hung wife, it was true glory for the new matchmaker.

Since then Gitta had become his shame. It was bad for business to have her standing there with arms crossed and tapping a foot, Gitta Floog on display in his dining-room window. Liebman sighed. He waved her forward, rushed her down a hallway. Gitta expected no less. She followed him into a back office with a ratty couch and a file cabinet, a dingy room looking onto an alley.

This is how Little Liebman the matchmaker found himself alone with Gitta Floog as she tried to persuade him to undo what he'd done.

"Forty years ago, Gitta. My very first match."

"Why me for practice? Why my life sacrificed to get started yours?" She dropped down onto the crumpled sheet spread over the sofa.

"A good rate, Gitta. Even for a first match. Even for then. A symbolic commission I took, if ever there was." He did not mention the miracle he had performed. "Forty years is late for a customer to come back."

"Thirty-six, first of all. Eighteen married, eighteen waiting for Berel to break."

"So thirty-six. Still a long time for the customer to return."

"I've had a long day, so I don't want anything that will put up much of a struggle."

Gitta stood up, moved close to Liebman. She looked down into his eyes.

"A hammer," she said. "At Sears they will replace a hammer for life."

"This is because of volume, Gitta. Where there is volume people can afford."

"So I'll pay," she said. "Same as a match. I'll pay you to unmake a wedding, same as to do."

LILI'S eye swam over the glass, swelled and softened, ran suddenly long. Then precision focus and Lili's steady gaze. This was how Gitta knew her, through snippets of clarity and a collection of ever-warping parts, a view from the underside of the magnifying light. And she was sure that Lili knew her only from above: that she'd pass her on the street, unfamiliar with Gitta upright, part of a crowd. What Lili knew were pores, the space between nose and snail of lip—and more intimately than any lover had known any part of a loved one's body.

"What do you mean, Liebman doesn't want to get involved?" Lili said, turning up the power of the machine. "We have involved him already. The day he introduced you to Berel he involved himself. Tell him that, Gitta. Tell him when Berel shows up dead he'll have no trouble understanding."

"I can't do any of this."

"Then Plan B." Lili shouted to her husband, "Gennaro, get over here!" They heard his footsteps as he approached the curtain that split the rest of the room from the salon.

"What?" he said through the fabric.

Gitta propped herself up on her elbows. "Do not, Lili. Do not start this yet. Not as a joke, not as a threat. Because I really might want it. If we do it, we do it for real."

"What?" Gennaro said.

"Put on the rice. Go put on the rice for dinner." They were silent while he walked off. Then Lili whispered, "You go explain to that midget. You tell the matchmaker that he better beat a divorce out of your husband before you make the problem disappear. Tell him whatever you need to tell him, Widow Floog. Because you've got three choices. The matchmaker, Gennaro's cousin, or shutting your mouth. If you're never going to do anything, then save us both some energy. At least keep your mouth shut so I can do my work."

Lili guided the needle. “Back to the matchmaker,” she said, and she pressed the pedal and held it down until Gitta thought she saw smoke.

KNOCKING did not bring Liebman, so Gitta looked around the alley for something with heft. Next to a Dumpster she found a pipe with a joint on the end and tested its weight. This she swung against the metal door at the back of the matchmaker’s apartment. Each blow left a dent and made a noise that carried. She had lifted the pipe for a third swing when Liebman peered through the grimy window and opened the door to the back room. He had an arm raised. Gitta was a large woman, and even a small foe with such a weapon—well, he would not put anything past her. The old suspicion.

“Put that thing down.” Liebman cowered. “I’ve got a front door, too, you already know.”

“Not trying to complicate,” Gitta said. “Not trying to make extra trouble for you. You hide me in the back room, I’ll keep myself hidden. I’m interested only in finishing our business.”

“Business we don’t have. You want your money back you can have it. I admit your match was no success.”

Gitta dropped the pipe, pushed past Liebman, and made her way to the crumpled sheet on the ratty couch. Gitta was not the only person who had trouble with Berel. He had been known for other acts of hard-heartedness over the years. Liebman was well aware that there was no talking to the man and that no divorce would be granted without drawing some blood.

Liebman wrung his hands. “I can’t help you,” he said. “What could you be back for but to hear it again?”

“Do you know what my life is?” she said. “Do you know how it is?”

Liebman thought about this. She was trapped. She was a woman anchored to a foul husband, a married widow or maybe a divorced wife. And he was also aware of the superstition that surrounded her, mothers stepping between their newlywed daughters and Gitta’s crooked gaze. She was a woman who raised whispers. Yes, he thought he understood.

“I know they talk about you,” he said. “All this time and they still talk.”

“You think I don’t hear the nonsense?” Gitta turned red. “They treat me like a witch. They say Berel snapped, chased me around the house with a razor, and kicked me out in a rage. They say I made a deal with the Devil and was suddenly free of hair and husband—but like any Devil deal it went horribly wrong.” She covered her mouth. “I got rid of it to be pretty. The day I left. Got rid of it to maybe meet a new husband, have a child or two, and start a nice life.”

“And?”

And what should she tell him? That Berel had won if winning meant ruining her life and losing meant seeing her happy and free?

Instead, Gitta told him what she needed to see the job done: “Maybe it *is* late, Liebman, maybe, you think, sad. But I’m here to tell you”—she smoothed her skirt, looked away— “Gitta Floog has fallen in love.”

“Can’t be,” Liebman said, so surprised he didn’t consider the insult involved.

“A shock, I’m sure. But such things happen on their own. Even to me. I’m in love, Liebman. And, like our mother Sarah, even the greater wonder, I’m pregnant. When my period did not come, I thought it had gone, but fifty-four years old and I discover it’s otherwise.”

“Not Berel’s?” was all Liebman could say. The scandal!

“A genius you are, Liebman. A detective. No, it’s not Berel’s. But the father is in our community, a hot-tempered man.” She went on, though Liebman looked as though he might die. “We won’t have our baby born a bastard.”

“Then there really is a man?”

“Modern times, Liebman. Modern times. Still, in some form or another there’s generally a man. Listen to me, he has found someone from outside, someone to make me a widow. Berel would be dead already if I hadn’t begged a chance to talk with you. My companion is already decided. ‘On Liebman’s head’ is what he told me. ‘The whole mess, it’s butter sitting on Liebman’s head. Only Little Liebman can keep it from melting into his eyes.’ ”

“Who is he?” Liebman buttoned and unbuttoned his collar.

“When it’s done, you’ll know. You’ll be the first invited to the wedding. Right now, though, it’s time for violence. Only two facts concern you. We’ll kill him and I’m pregnant. So take your pick. Take your pick for what’s more urgent. Take your pick for why it needs to get done. But the butter sits on your head, softening already.”

NOT long after Gitta stepped out of the alley, looked both ways, and crossed the street, a new rumor about Gitta Floog began to spread. Maybe someone looked down from a narrow bathroom window at the banging of the pipe, or maybe the sometimes homeless Akiva was peering out from the Dumpster when the back door closed. Any number of people might have seen Gitta step out of Liebman’s alley into the bright light of day. But the base of the rumor, the meat of it, well, only one person, only Little Liebman, could be guilty of letting it slip.

Proportion was the first thing to go. Even before the rumor had reached proper dispatch it ballooned past belief and had to be scaled back to an absorbable size. There were stylistic variations, of course, but one detail stuck, providing the rumor with unassailable authenticity. It was the addition of Liebman’s name as the father of the child and Gitta’s secret man. It was a twist Liebman hadn’t thought of, an advantage of which Gitta hadn’t dreamed.

From that instant on, no one needed it over more than Liebman. What parent would trust a matchmaker caught up in a scandal? How to let him judge a prospective son-in-law’s character if he couldn’t seem to manage his own? No, the deal was done. Liebman was fully involved.

THREE windows faced the street in Gitta’s efficiency. The one over the dormant radiator was open a crack. On the opposite side of the long room was a kitchen area, the front door, and a panel with the intercom buzzer.

It was after Berel’s first beating, and Gitta sat in a chair in the center of her apartment. This was the best she could do.

Berel was screaming outside. His voice carried up the three stories and made its way through the crack in the window. It was a terrible effect. Gitta’s blinds were drawn, and the voice, localized and harsh, taunted her, as if Berel were somehow floating outside her window and yelling in. Then he'd pause—a second's silence—and the buzzer would start screeching on her other side. Again, there was this sense of his presence, as if Berel were standing in the hallway leaning on a button right outside the door.

She had no television and no radio. She couldn't concentrate on her reading or the Psalms. So she had pulled a chair to the middle of the room, as far as she could get from Berel on both sides.

And she sat there, head in her hands, trapped between him.

LILI flipped the switch on her machine and hit the side panel until the power light glowed.

Gitta lay down on the table. "Repetitive nightmares like my father used to have about Siberia," she said. "Sometimes Berel comes through the window and sometimes through the door. It's an elopement. Berel is in a suit. I'm gowned and veiled and clutching a bouquet. Every night he carries me away, either by the door or down a ladder, always with the flowers in my arms. And always, whether from their windows or lining the hallway, the neighbors are watching and wishing us luck. From the outside it looks like perfect romance. And I can see why they confuse the bride's weak moaning—all of them smiling and waving at my call for help. They stand there cooing while Berel rips my dress off, tears it all off right there in front of them, everything but the veil."

"Under the veil?" Lili wanted to know. "What's under the veil?"

"Hairless," Gitta said. "No prettier or uglier. But hairless, hairless I am sure."

Lili smiled at that, went after a stray follicle between Gitta's eyebrows, landed the needle, struck a nerve so that Gitta's left lid fluttered and she felt a strange comfort, as if her face had been split magically in two.

"He showed up again after the second beating, showed up out my window, buzzing at my door. This time he stayed longer. It was supposed to improve, Lili, but it's made my life only worse. Every bit of punishment he gets, he takes out on me tenfold. Hardhearted, my Berel. That's what the matchmaker says. He keeps calling to tell me Berel will never give in."

"And what do you say?"

"I say exactly as we practiced: 'There are two ways to free an *agunah*. One is for the husband to give a *get*. And the other is to bring proof of his death. One way or the other, Liebman. One way or the other.'"

"Oh, that's good, Gitta. That last 'one way' is very good."

BEREL was returning from a night trip to the supermarket. One moment he was walking and the next he was in a car with four other men—his groceries left spilled on the sidewalk.

The men wore children's plastic masks with tight swirls of yellow hair and red, red lips, a little Queen Esther mask on each one. But the disguises did not sufficiently cover their grownup faces. Black beards burst out from behind bulbous rouged cheeks. Sidelocks stuck out like pigtails from under elastic bands.

They punched Berel and smacked him before anyone said a word.

Then the one in the front passenger seat, the smallest by far, turned to talk to Berel, restrained between two Esthers in the back.

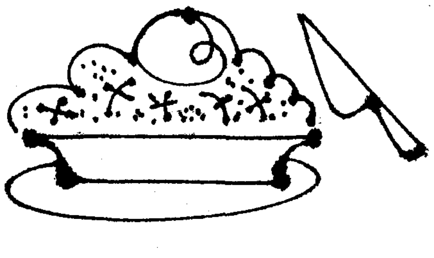
"Hard to find people willing to beat you anymore, Berel. Not out of mercy but because it's become such a chore."

"Such a tiny, tiny thug," Berel said. "I was wondering. And then the familiar voice. Since when are you so bold, Little Liebman, as to place yourself at the scene of the crime?"

"Maybe this time I don't leave anyone to talk."

Little Liebman motioned to the two Esthers, and they wrestled Berel onto his stomach and taped his hands to his ankles so that they might carry him like a bundle. The one on the right unlocked his door. "This ride," Liebman said, "I'm making it clear. Tonight we make progress."

"You want progress, Liebman? I've got some of my own. As soon as you let me loose, I'm headed straight for the newspapers. I'm going to tip the goyim off to the injustice that goes on."



"The newspapers?" Liebman laughed. "Yes, have them report it. Just the kind of Jewish story the papers love."

"It will ruin you, Liebman."

"If only you heard the rumors. My name is already ruined. Let them run it on the front page. In New York you'll find no sympathy for a man who enslaves his wife. The feminists will bring me a medal for beating you. The mayor will put me on a float in the Thanksgiving Day parade."

The car headed out on the highway, a change in rhythm. Every few seconds there was a seam in the road so that the smoothness of the ride was broken by a rhythmic *thuck*.

The car door by Berel's head opened and he was lowered toward the flowing script of road. He worried not over disfigurement but over loss of senses, being rubbed clean of eyes or tongue, being rolled into the alley without his ears. Berel screamed into the wind and was pulled back in.

"Now give the *get* or we head out to drown you at Jones Beach. Two to hold you under the water and two kosher witnesses to watch."

"You won't do it," Berel said. "You're a matchmaker, not a murderer. You understand the sanctity of unions. Like in nature, Liebman. Like it says about pigeons. You kill one, you have to kill its mate. To make it kosher you've got to kill both, me and Gitta both."

Berel was once again lowered out of the car. Dangerously close. A pebble shot from a tire hit him in the cheek. He moved his tongue to try and find it in his mouth, sure the stone had cut through. They lifted him back in.

"With arranged marriages," Liebman said, "a good match is as difficult as separating the earth from the sky. Don't you think? A wonder they ever hold."

Berel buried his face in the warmth of the right-hand Esther's lap.

"Gitta is desperate, Berel. Desperate. At this point she feels it's your life or hers. And we can't have another generation ruined by this marriage. Royal Hills doesn't need another *mamzer*. No, we cannot have a bastard born because of you."

"A bastard?" This was too much. "If she's pregnant, I'll tear it from her womb." Berel went mad, fought like a tiger, put on quite a show for a man with arms and legs tied behind his back.

There was a struggle to control him. They slammed his head against the door until Liebman shouted for them to stop. He thought they might knock the life from the body, as if the soul were a filling to be loosed from a tooth.

"Are you still with us, Berel?" Liebman held on to the back of his seat.

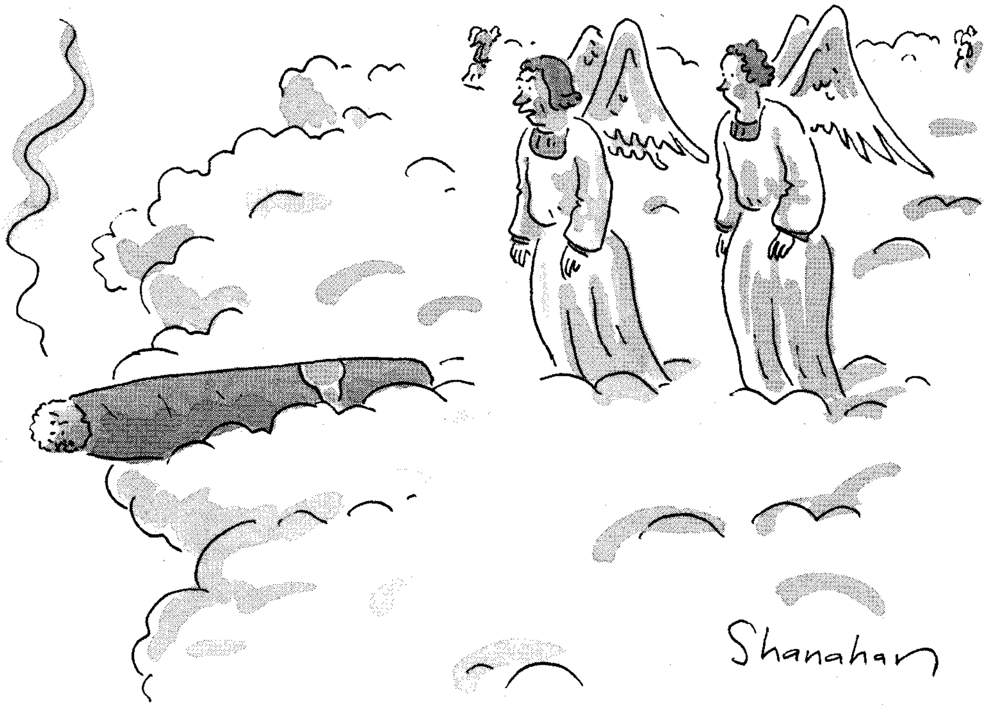
Berel nodded, licking his lips.

"Any chance you're thinking clearly now? Might you reconsider before we kill you?"

"That's what you'll have to do," Berel said, perking up. "Like in the American ceremony. Till death do us part."

Liebman pulled off his mask and rubbed at his eyes. He nodded to the men.

This time when Berel was lowered out the door he felt the car speed up and the grip tighten on his hair. The one holding his legs used maximum control. And, as if they were artisans attending to that final detail, Berel's head was forced to the grindstone, his face to the road. For an instant. For a touch. The Esthers took off a perfect circle, a sliver—not deep—of Berel's nose.



"Damn—we just missed him."

• •

Berel screamed outside her window, taunts and threats, declarations of a love he'd never shown. And his refrain, "Why do they beat me?" This—as if he couldn't come up with a reason—he yelled again and again.

Gitta had things she would have liked to scream. She'd have liked to stand under the window of every Jew in Royal Hills and scream at the top of her lungs, demand to know why her divorce needed an excuse or consent, anyone's help at all.

After Berel left, Gitta carried her chair back to the table, put on a sweater, and wandered over to the bridge. She followed the walkway, gazing out at the river, the traffic speeding by on her other side. This was the old decision Gitta had pondered. Not life or death for Berel but traffic or river, traffic or water, to which side should she dive?

Little Liebman handed Gitta an apple and leaned against the file cabinet. "Showing already," he said, looking at her stomach.

She stared back at him, the corners of her mouth turned down. She didn't appreciate the familiarity and didn't trust Liebman's invitation. It was the first time he'd asked her over since the beatings began.

"Every nightmare has its end, Gitta. Berel has come to his senses."

"Nonsense. What, he promised a divorce while you twisted an arm? He came to my house after, same as always." Gitta lowered herself onto the couch as if she were indeed carrying extra weight. She sniffed at the apple. "When he throws the *get* in my face, Little Liebman, then I'll know it's done."

"We put a fear into him and he wouldn't budge. We dumped him in the alley half dead and still swearing he'd never see you free. Then three days ago he shows up here, then yesterday, and again this morning. Each time more remorseful, each time clearer in what he had to say. It's the little *mamzer* that got him." Liebman pointed at his belly. "Not for you or himself does he have any mercy, but only for the unborn. The suffering of the father, he said, should not be borne out on the son."

"Suddenly there is sense?"

"He's never lied before. Stubborn and coconut-brained, he runs around spouting nonsense. But never has he agreed falsely to a divorce. He, too, like you, thinks there is some trick. He says meet him once and tell him to his face that you carry another man's child. He doesn't ask for the man's name. He doesn't want to hear a tiny heartbeat or see a note from a doctor. He says, after the degradation of how he learned, he will only bring you a divorce if you tell him about the baby yourself."

Lili bent a needle. She put down the wand and fished around for a replacement, talking all the while and working herself into a rage.

"Eighteen years it takes you to build up the courage and then you buy into nonsense like this. I'm coming with you, Gitta. I'm going to strangle that bum myself."

"The matchmaker is right. Berel's never lied."

Lili slid the magnifying light out of the way and moved her face right to Gitta's so that crooked eyes crossed.

"You're meeting in a hotel, fine, perfect. But let me tell you something, Berel's not offering you a divorce, Gitta, he's offering an alibi. Why not have it so when he leaves a gypsy cab jumps the curb and runs him down? You can be the first to scream, to yell in a lobby with a hundred witnesses, while Berel is hit-and-runned right outside."

"I lived with him for too long not to know what goes on in that miserable mind," Gitta said. "Berel is finally tired. He is going to give me my divorce. Soon I'll have my life back and then who knows what I'll do? Get to work on those roots, Lili. I might yet find romance."

YES, she was bitter. Her second date in fifty-four years and again with Berel. Again in the lobby of a Manhattan hotel. Her corpse would rot, she was sure, without her ever having had anyone hold open a door.

Gitta stepped down three stairs into a deep, narrow lobby, chose a couch and a chair unoccupied by any of the long-legged, knife-chinned men and women—so smartly dressed and fortified.

Before she had sunk fully into the chair a waitress approached. Gitta ordered a crème de menthe, which she would not touch. Her way of paying rent for sitting.

Gitta had crossed the street more than once to avoid Berel, hurried into the women's section or out a side door to escape a confrontation at shul. This wasn't the first time she'd laid eyes on him since she left, but as he made his way down those three steps, her only lover in a lifetime, her husband and tormentor, she realized that she'd not uttered a word to him in all those years.

He'd gotten old. His beard was full of white and his cheeks hung loose on his skull. And then there were the bruises. She could see the blood-black of one under his beard and the more shocking perfect scab on the end of his nose.

"I came to ask you," he said, in a voice detached, as if sending a message with this Gitta to take back to his wife, "if you'll give me the child."

Gitta chewed at her bottom lip, lowered her chin. Despicable from the start.

"Not this way," Gitta said. "I say what you want to hear and you give me what's left of my life."

"I'm allowed to ask, no? Denied so many things, you couldn't expect I wouldn't ask." Berel was sad, suddenly. Gitta could see. Amazing. How many crimes produce only victims, she wondered, everyone claiming innocence and everyone hurt. The waitress put down a napkin and set a glass in front of Gitta.

"You've fallen so low that you eat in a *tref* hotel? So adultery is not your only sin?"

"It's only a drink, Berel, and I've yet to touch it. And what I do is none of your business. I want from you only one thing."

"And I wanted from you only one thing. The duties of a wife fulfilled." He did not change his tone, but the old, loose skin began to tighten, his rage, as from an organ ruptured, began to seep into cheeks and purple tongue, spread through the broken veins of his nose. "All I wanted. To see my name live on."

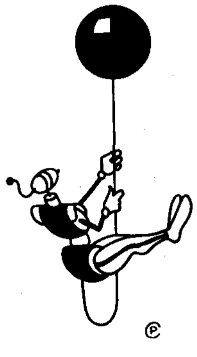
"Wasted energy, Berel. I tell you I'm pregnant and then you give me a divorce. Agreed? Just as you told Liebman."

Berel snorted at that.

"What is my word to Liebman, who beats and degrades me and is said to be the father of your bastard child?"

"What is this, Berel?" Gitta's voice lost its edge. "This is not what was planned."

"No, neither did I plan a life of misery because of you. I was about to give you a divorce, you should know. Thought it out, talked to my rebbe, I was literally on my way over to arrange it the first time they pulled me into that car. Later, even with those Nazis hounding me, I saw it was time to give in. Then Liebman told me you were pregnant."



How he knew her, understood how to tear her in half, not Lili's peaceful, electric-needle magic, but how to tear her whole being apart, rip her brutally in two.

"You weren't ever going to give anything," she said. "This is another of your tortures."

"Shaming me, making me a shame in my community, and you talk of torture. What does a whore need a divorce for when she sells herself either way?"

Gitta went hot with panic. Her recurring reality was as bad as her nightmares. It was supposed to improve. Somehow, sometime, her life was supposed to get better. She grabbed at Berel's sleeve and pulled him close.

"There is no baby," she said. "My own trick. I've been loyal all these years." Gitta tried for a smile but got tears. "Now you must," and she was crying, "must," and she was yelling, "must give me a divorce before I die."

"I only came for the truth," he said. And like that he was up, shaking her hand free, and taking the three stairs in a stride.

Gitta stood and watched Berel push his way through the revolving door, saw a handsome young man pop out in his place.

She tried to imagine the high-pitched screech of brakes, the car hitting and thumping, the gypsy cab racing off into the night. Gitta could call Lili from a phone booth and see it over with before morning. She could wake up knowing he was gone and say her prayers with fervor. Because she could take it, she could live with his murder.

Gitta unzipped her wallet and shook her head.

How close he comes, her Berel. His whole life a near-death experience, teetering on the blade of her courage.

She thought, too, of Liebman, who said he knew, he felt, he suffered right there along with her. Even when she makes a denial, even when no baby comes, he will still be tied to the rumors. Royal Hills would make it fit, with an adoption, a miscarriage, a hairy dwarf child locked away. Let him know from it, she felt. Let them whisper his name. She did not feel generous. Did not care.

Then Gitta thought of herself, the years remaining, the end of this life. Let it be short, she thought. Though she knew she would see a hundred and twenty years. It would be like in the old wives' tales, corpses laid to rest still growing thick yellow nails and wiry hair. And this Gitta knew, folktale or not, would be her doom—buried, waiting, the wrong man's ring going loose around her finger, and a scholar's beard growing and growing. Roots buried deeper than even Lili had dreamed. Hair growing from bone. ♦

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE TRUTHTELLER

It was when Orwell stayed home that he changed the world.

BY CLIVE JAMES

WHO wrote this? "Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." But you guessed straightaway: George Orwell. The subject stated up front, the sudden acceleration from the scope-widening parenthesis into the piercing argument that follows, the way the obvious opposition between "lies" and "truthful" leads into the shockingly abrupt coupling of "murder" and "respectable," the elegant, reverse-written coda clinched with a dirt-common epithet, the whole easy-seeming poise and compact drive of it, a world view compressed to the size of a motto from a fortune cookie, demanding to be read out and sayable in a single breath—it's the Orwell style. But you can't call it "Orwellian," because that means Big Brother, Newspeak, the Gestapo, the K.G.B., the Stasi, and any other totalitarian obscenity that has ever reared its head or ever will.

The word "Orwellian" is a daunting example of the fate that a distinguished writer can suffer at the hands of journalists. When a totalitarian setup, whether in fact or in fantasy—in Brazil or in "Brazil"—is called "Orwellian," it is as if George Orwell had helped to create it instead of helping to dispel its euphemistic thrall. (Kafka has suffered a similar fate with the word "Kafkaesque.") Such distortions would be enough to make us give up on journalism altogether if we happened to forget that Orwell himself was a journalist. Here, to help us remember, are the twenty volumes of the new complete edition, cared for with awe-inspiring industry, dedication, and judgment by Peter Davison, a scholar based in Leicester, who has spent the last two decades chasing down every single piece of paper his subject ever wrote on and then battling with publishers to persuade them that the accumulated result would supply a demand. The All of Orwell arrives in a cardboard box the size of a piece of check-in luggage: a man in a suitcase. As I write, the books are stacked on my desk, on a chair, on a side table, on the floor. A full, fat eleven of the twenty volumes consist largely of his collected journalism, reproduced in strict chronology along with his broadcasts, letters, memos, diaries, jottings, et exhaustively and fascinatingly al. The nine other volumes, over there near the stereo, were issued previously, in 1986-87, and comprise the individual works he published during his lifetime, including at least two books that directly and undeniably affected history. But, lest we run away with the idea that "Animal Farm" and "1984" are the core of his achievement, here, finally, is all the incidental writing, to remind us that they were only the outer layer, and could not have existed without what lay inside. Those famous, world-changing novels are just the bark. The journalism is the tree.

A four-volume edition of the journalism, essays, and letters, which was published in 1968 (co-edited by Ian Angus and Orwell's widow, Sonia), had already given us a good idea of how the tree grew, but now we get an even better chance to watch its roots suck up the nutrients of contemporary political experience and— But it's time to abandon that metaphor. Orwell never liked it when the writing drove the meaning. One of his precepts for composition was "Let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way around." For him, prose style was a matter in which the ethics determined the aesthetics. Reading others, he was open to persuasion, but he would not be lulled, least of all by mellifluous rhetoric. Anyone's prose style, even his, sets out to seduce. Orwell's, superficially the plainest of the plain, was of a rhythm and a shapeliness to seduce the angels. Even at this distance, he needs watching, and would have been the first to admit it.

ORWELL was born into the impoverished upper class—traditionally, for its brighter children, a potent incubator of awareness about how the social system works. Either they acquire an acute hunger to climb back up the system—often taking the backstairs route through the arts, à la Sir John Betjeman—or they go the other way, seeking an exit from the whole fandango and wishing it to damnation. Orwell, by his own later accounts, went the other way from his school days onward. In one of his last great essays, "Such, Such Were the Joys," he painted his years at prep school (where he nicknamed the headmaster's gorgon of a wife Flip) as a set of panels by Hieronymus Bosch:

> "Here is a little boy," said Flip, indicating me to the strange lady, "who wets his bed every night. Do you know what I am going to do if you wet your bed again?" she added, turning to me. "I am going to get the Sixth Form to beat you."

Orwell had a better time at Eton—it sounds as if he would have had a better time in Siberia—but twenty years later, after he left it, reviewing his friend Cyril Connolly's partly autobiographical "Enemies of Promise," he poured scorn on Connolly's fond recollections of the place. When Connolly proclaimed himself fearful that after his climactic years of glory at Eton nothing in the rest of his life could ever be so intense, Orwell reacted as if Flip had just threatened to deliver him to the Sixth Form all over again: "'Cultured' middle-class life has reached a depth of softness at which a public-school education—five years in a lukewarm bath of snobbery—can actually be looked back upon as an eventful period."

Orwell often reviewed his friends like that. With his enemies, he got tough. But it should be said at the outset that even with his enemies he rarely took an inhuman tone. Even Hitler and Stalin he

Though his views would keep him out of mainstream newspapers, Orwell's journalism was at the core of his achievement.

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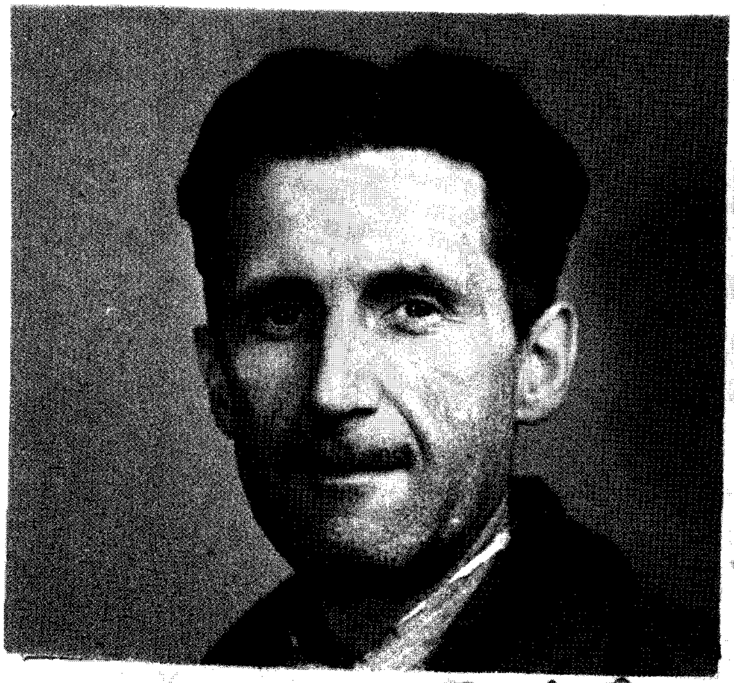

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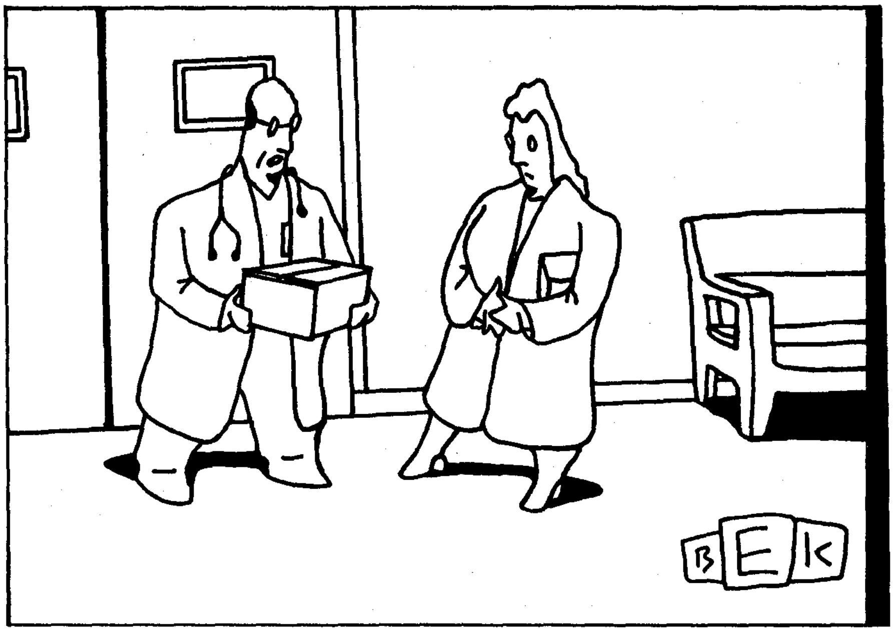

"Here—in case you ever need a shoulder to cry on."

treated as men rather than as machines, and his famous characterization of the dogma-driven hack as "the gramophone mind" would have lost half its force if he had not believed that there was always a human being within the fanatic. His comprehension, though, did not incline him to be forgiving: quite the reverse. Society might have made the powerful what they were as surely as it had made the powerless what they were, but the mere fact that the powerful were free to express whatever individuality they possessed was all the more reason to hold them personally responsible for crushing the freedom of others. When they beat you, you can join them or you can join the fight on behalf of those they beat. It seems a fair guess that Orwell had already made his choice by the time Flip threatened him with a visit from the Sixth Form.

In the early part of his adult life, he was a man of action. He wrote journalism when he could—for him it was more natural than breathing, which, thanks to a lurking tubercular condition, eventually became a strain—but he wanted to be where the action was. Already questioning his own privileged, if penny-pinching, upbringing and education, he went out to Burma at the age of nineteen and for the next five years served as a colonial policeman—an experience from which he reached the conclusion (incorporated later into his novel "Burmese Days" and his essays "Shooting an Elephant" and "A Hanging") that the British Empire was a capitalist mechanism to exploit the subjugated poor. Back in Europe, he found out what it was like to be a proletarian by becoming one himself—"Down and Out in Paris and London," "The Road to Wigan Pier"—and expanded his belief about the exploitative nature of the Empire to embrace the whole of capitalist society, anywhere. He volunteered for service in Spain in the fight against Franco, and the selfless comradeship of ordinary Spaniards risking their lives to get justice—"Homage to Catalonia"—confirmed his belief that an egalitarian socialist society was the only fair and decent alternative to the capitalist boondoggle, of which Franco's Fascism, like Hitler's and Mussolini's, was merely the brute expression.

So here, already formed, were two of his three main political beliefs—about the awfulness of capitalism and the need for an egalitarian alternative. There was nothing uncommon about them except their intensity. The third belief was the spanner in the works. Again, he was not the only one to have figured out that the Soviet Union's vaunted Socialist utopia was a put-up job, but nobody ever expressed his revulsion better or more lastingly than Orwell, who got it right without ever having to go there.

He went somewhere else instead. Discovering in Spain, from the behavior of the Russian representatives and their Communist adherents, that the Soviet Union was as implacable an enemy of his egalitarian aspirations as Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, he developed the idea that it wasn't enough to be against Mussolini and Hitler: you had to be against Stalin as well, because the enemy was totalitarianism itself. That was as far as he got before his career as a man of action came to an end. Shot in the throat by a sniper, he recuperated, but if he had stayed in Spain any longer he would have almost certainly been murdered. The anarchist group in whose ranks he had fought, the POUM, was being liquidated on Soviet orders, and his name was on the list. (The evidence is all here, in Volume XI, and it is enough to bring on a cold sweat: losing Orwell to the N.K.V.D. would have had the same devastating effect on our intellectual patrimony that the loss of the historian Marc Bloch and the literary critic Jean Prévost to the Gestapo had on the French.)

Back in England with his three main beliefs—capitalism was a disease, socialism was the cure, and Communism would kill the patient—the erstwhile man of action carried on his cause as a man of letters. For part of the Second World War, he was a member of the Home Guard, and for a further part he was with the BBC, preparing broadcasts for India, but as far as the main action went he was an onlooker. No onlooker ever looked on more acutely. The journalism he wrote at the close of the thirties and in the forties would have been more than enough by itself to establish him as having fulfilled his life's purpose, which he made explicit in his last years: "What I have most wanted to do is to make political writing into an art." The whole heavy atmosphere of the prelude to the war, the exhausting war itself, and its baleful aftermath: it's all there, reported with a vividness that eschews the consciously poetic but never lapses from the truly dramatic, because he had the talent and the humility to assess even a V-1 in terms of its effect on his own character, using his soliloquy to explain the play:

> Every weapon seems unfair until you have adopted it yourself. But I would not deny that the pilotless plane, flying bomb, or whatever its correct name may be, is an

exceptionally unpleasant thing, because, unlike most other projectiles, it gives you time to think. What is your first reaction when you hear that droning, zooming noise? Inevitably, it is a hope that the noise *won't stop*. You want to hear the bomb pass safely overhead and die away into the distance before the engine cuts out. In other words, you are hoping that it will fall on somebody else.

First, though, with the Spanish war over and the full European war not yet begun, he had another battle on his hands, bloodless this time but almost as noisy: the battle against Britain's left-wing intellectuals. He realized that they had willfully declined to get the point about Spain: they still saw Communism as the only bulwark against Fascism. Worse, they thought that the Moscow trials were justified or otherwise to be condoned—a price worth paying to Build Socialism. Orwell's conviction that no socialism worth having could be built that way set him at odds with the progressive illuminati of his generation, and that altercation was made sharper by how much he and they had in common. He, too, had had the generosity to declare his own privileges meaningless if they were bought at the expense of the downtrodden. He, too, believed that the civilization that had given birth to him was a confidence trick. And, although he had already concluded that free speech was the one liberal institution no putative future society could abolish if it was to remain just, he still thought that the plutocratic oligarchy allowed liberal institutions to continue only as part of the charade that favored the exploitation of the poor. (In the sixties, the same notion lived again, as "repressive tolerance.") Fascism, he proclaimed, was just bourgeois democracy without the lip service to liberal values, the iron fist without the velvet glove. In 1937, he twice ventured the opinion that democracy and Fascism "are Tweedledum and Tweedledee." In the same year, he warned that "the moneyed classes" might trick Britain into "another imperialist war" with Germany: language hard to distinguish from Party-line boilerplate.

Indeed, when the war began he said that Britain was bound to be defeated unless it had a social revolution, which might even require an armed uprising. Possibly he had been carried away by the rifles issued to the Home Guard, and had visions of an English POUM taking pot shots at the oppressor. (Orwell rose to the rank of sergeant in the Home Guard, but Davison should have found room to say, in a footnote, that his hero was notoriously more enthusiastic than competent: a Court of Inquiry was conducted after he supervised a mortar drill that almost resulted in the decapitation of one of his men.) Even in 1941, well after the Battle of Britain demonstrated that this bourgeois democracy might well hope to withstand Hitler, we can still hear Orwell promising that "England is on the road to revolution" and that to bring the revolution about a "real English socialist movement" would be "perfectly willing to use violence if necessary."

But the facts were hard at work on a mind whose salient virtue was its willingness to let them in. Even before the war, he had been impressed by how the English people in general had managed to preserve and develop civilized values despite the cynicism of their rulers. Now he became less inclined to argue that all those things had happened merely because the sweated labor of colonial coolies had paid for them, and were invalidated as a result. He was even capable, from time to time, of giving some of the cynical rulers a nod of respect: Orwell's praise of Churchill was never better than grudging, but nobody else's was ever more moving, because nobody else would have so much preferred to damn Churchill and all his works. From the early war years until the end of his life, Orwell wrote more and more about British civilization. He wrote less and less about the irredeemable obsolescence of bourgeois democracy. He had come to suspect that the democratic part might depend on the bourgeois part.

Most of the left-wing intellectuals hadn't. After Hitler clamorously repudiated his non-aggression pact with Stalin by launching Operation Barbarossa, they were once again able to laud the virtues of the Soviet Union at the tops of their voices. Even on the right, keeping Uncle Joe sweet was regarded as mandatory. In this matter, Orwell showed what can only be described as intellectual heroism. Though his unpalatable opinions restricted his access to mainstream publications—most of his commentaries were written for *Tribune*, an influential but small-circulation weekly newspaper backed by the Labour Party's star heavyweight, Aneurin Bevan—Orwell went on insisting that the Soviet regime was a tyranny, even as the Red Army battled

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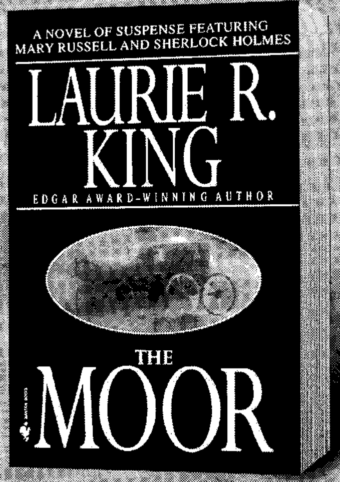

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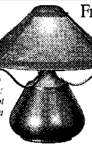

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the Panzers to a standstill on the outskirts of Moscow. At this distance, it is hard to imagine what a lonely line this was to take. But when it came to a principle Orwell was the sort of man who would rather shiver in solitude than hold his tongue.

Solitude fitted his character. Though he was sociable, and even amorous, in his everyday life, he didn't look it: he looked as gauntly ascetic as John Carradine, and in his mental life he was a natural loner. Collectivist theories could appeal to his temperament for only so long, and in this strictly chronological arrangement of his writings we can watch him gradually deconstructing his own ideology in deference to a set of principles. Even with this degree of documentation, it is not easy to see quite how he did it from moment to moment, because for a crucial period of the war he metaphorically went off the air. Literally, he had gone on it. For a two-year slog, from 1941 to late 1943, he expended most of his time and energy broadcasting to India for the BBC. Belated market research on the BBC's part revealed that not many Indians were listening (you guessed it: no radios), but the few who did manage to tune in heard some remarkable stuff from a man who had expended so much ink on insisting that the British would have to quit India. Orwell told them the truth: that they had a better chance with the British than with the Japanese. He also scripted weekly summaries of the war's progress. Writing on the tenth of January, 1942, he remarked on a tonal shift in Germany's official pronouncements:

> Until a week or two ago, the German military spokesmen were explaining that the attack on Moscow would have to be postponed until the spring, but that the German armies could quite easily remain on the line they now occupied. Already, however, they are admitting that a further retreat—or, as they prefer to call it, a rectification of the line—will be necessary.... Before the end of February, the Germans may well be faced with the alternative of abandoning nearly all their conquests in the northern part of the Russian front, or of seeing hundreds of thousands of soldiers freeze to death.

It was an optimistic forecast for 1942, but it all came true in 1943, and it showed two of Orwell's best attributes operating at once: he had a global grasp, and he was able to guess the truth by the way the other side told lies. The broadcasts make such good reading today that you almost feel sorry he ever stopped. From these indirect sources, you can surmise something of what was going on deep within his mind, and when he started writing journalism again he retroactively filled in some of the gaps. From the realization that the violent socialist revolution would not take place, he was apparently moving toward the conclusion that it should not. Reviewing a collection of Thomas Mann's essays published in English translation in 1943, he praised Mann in terms that would have been impossible for him before the war: "He never pretends to be other than he is, a middle-class Liberal, a believer in the freedom of the intellect, in human brotherhood; above all, in the existence of objective truth." While careful to point out that Mann was pro-socialist, and even excessively trustful of the U.S.S.R., Orwell went on to note, approvingly, that "he never budges from his 'bourgeois' contention that the individual is important, that freedom is worth having, that European culture is worth preserving, and that truth is not the exclusive possession of one race or class." For Orwell, who had once preached that bourgeois democracy existed merely to swindle the working class, this was a big switch.

The last and most acrimonious phase of Orwell's battle with the left-wing intelligentsia began not long after D Day. As the Allied forces fought their way out of Normandy, a piece by Orwell landed on a desk in America. *Partisan Review* would publish a London Letter in which Orwell complained about the Western Russophile intellectuals who refused to accept the truth about Stalinist terror. Clearly, what frightened him was that, even if they did accept it, Soviet prestige would lose little of its allure for them. For Orwell, the Cold War was already on, with the progressive intellectuals in the front rank of the foe. Orwell was the first to use the term "cold war," in an essay published in October, 1945, about the atomic bomb—the very device that would insure, in the long run, that the Cold War never became a hot one. At the time, however, he saw no cause for complacency.

But unreconstructed *gauchiste* pundits who would still like to dismiss Orwell as a "classic" Cold Warrior can find out here that he didn't fit the frame. For one thing, Orwell remained all too willing to accuse the West of structural deficiencies that were really much more contingent than he made out. When he argued, in the pages of *Tribune*, that the mass-circulation newspapers forced slop on their readership, he preferred to ignore the advice from a correspondent that it was really the readership forcing slop on the newspapers. He should have given far more attention to such criticisms, because they allowed for the possibility—as his own assumptions did not—that if ordinary people were freed from exploitation they would demand more frivolity, not less. And he was still inclined to regard Stalin's regime as a perversion of the Bolshevik revolution rather than as its essence. As late as 1946, it took the eminent émigré Russian scholar Gleb Struve to tell him that Zamyatin's "We," written in 1920 but never published in the Soviet Union, wasn't merely a projection of a possible totalitarian future but had drawn much of its inspiration from the Leninist present. If Orwell took this admonition in, he made little use of it. (He made great use of "We," however: if the English translation of Zamyatin's little classic had been as good as the French one, many more of the reviewers of "1984" might have spotted that Orwell's phantasmagoria had a distinguished precursor.)

As a journalist, Orwell had labored long and hard for small financial reward, and overwork had never been good for his delicate health. Life was pinched, not to say deprived, especially after his wife and faithful helpmeet Eileen (he was an unfaithful spouse and she may have been as well, but they depended on each other) died as a result of a medical blunder. The success of "Animal Farm," in 1945, could have bought him a reprieve. He upped stakes to a small farmhouse on the island of Jura, in the Hebrides, and cultivated his garden. Though he overestimated the strength he still had available for the hard life he lived there—he could grow vegetables to supplement his ration, but it took hard work in tough soil—the place was a welcome break from the treadmill of London. Mentally, however, he found no peace. A heightened anguish can be traced right through his last journalism until he gave it up to work on "1984." The left-wing intellectuals, already promoting the revisionism that continues into our own day, not only were giving Stalin the sole credit for having won the war but were contriving not to notice that he had rescinded the few liberties he had been forced to concede in order to fight it; that his rule by terror had resumed; and that in the Eastern European countries supposedly liberated by the Red Army any vestige of liberty left by the Nazis was being stamped flat. Once again, crimes on a colossal scale were being camouflaged with perverted language, and once again the intellectuals, whose professional instinct should have been to sick it up, were happily swallowing the lot. It took a great deal to persuade him that reasoned argument wasn't enough. But it wasn't, so he wrote "1984."

There are still diehards who would like to think that "1984" is not about the Soviet Union at all. Their argument runs: "Animal Farm" is a satire about what happened in Russia once upon a time, but "1984" is a minatory fantasy about something far bigger—the prospect of a world divided up into a few huge centers of absolute power, of which a Soviet-style hegemony would be only one, and the United States, of course, would be another. It is just possible that Orwell thought the Marshall Plan was meant to have the same imperialist effect in Europe as the Red Army's tanks. He never actually said so, but people as intelligent as Gore Vidal believe much the same thing today. The late Anthony Burgess sincerely believed that "1984," because the Ministry of Truth bore such a strong resemblance to the BBC canteen, had been inspired by the condition of postwar Britain under rationing. As Orwell said so resonantly in his essay "Notes on Nationalism," "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool."

If they didn't get it in the West, they got it in the East. From the day of the book's publication until far into the Thaw, it meant big trouble for any Soviet citizen who had a copy in his possession. In the years to come, now that the Soviet archives are opening up, there will be a fruitful area of study in trying to decide which were the Western cultural influences that did most to help the Evil Empire melt down. For all we know, the jokes were always right, and it was the Beatles albums and the bootleg bluejeans that did the trick. But it will not be surprising if "1984," even more than "The Gulag Archipelago," turns out to be the book that had the greatest subversive effect, ounce for ounce. For one thing, you could put "1984" in your pocket: a portable little slab of spiritual plastique, a mindblower.

But if the part played by Orwell's dystopian novels in the dismantling of the Sovietized monolith will always be hard to assess, there is less difficulty about measuring the effect of his last period of journalism on his own country. Self-immured on Jura, he was a Prospero running on the reserve tank of his magic. Orwell was only forty-two, but he had little physical strength left, and although many friends and colleagues sent him letters and books, and presents of rice and chocolate, and some even made the slow and tricky journey to visit him, he was short of love. A widower of some fame and no longer without means, he offered his affections to a succession of young women and found himself in the humiliating position of being respected and refused. When it emerged recently that he handed a list of fellow-travellers to a government propaganda unit, suggestions that he had conspired in a witch-hunt carried little force. McCarthyism was a nonstarter in Britain, and most of those named on the list were already glad to have it known that they had aligned their prayer mats in the direction of the Kremlin. But if he lapsed from his own standards by tittle-tattling in school the most likely reason was that his Foreign Office contact was a noted beauty. He was sending her a bouquet.

The young woman who finally accepted him, Sonia Brownell (renowned in literary London as the Venus of Euston Road), married him practically on his deathbed: cold comfort. He kept a diary of what was happening in his garden—small things growing as the great man withered. For us, the only consolation is that he could speak so clearly even as the walls of his lungs were giving way against the tide of blood. The succession of magnificent essays he wrote as the harsh war wound down into an austere peace add up to a political event in themselves: a textbook example of how well-informed commentary on events can feed back into history and help to shape its course.

It takes nothing from Davison's

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achievement to say that these last essays are probably best encountered in the "Collected Essays," or even in a single small volume, such as "Inside the Whale," where they will be found to have the effect of poems, as the paragraphs succeed one another with the inevitability of perfectly wrought stanzas, with every sentence in the right place yet begging to be remembered on its own, like a line from a magisterial elegy. "Notes on Nationalism," "The Prevention of Literature," "Politics and the English Language," "Why I Write," "Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of 'Gulliver's Travels' "—read for and by themselves, they tell you all you need to know about Orwell except the one fact so poignantly revealed here: that they were the work of a man who was not only dying but dying young. Very few writers about politics have said much in their forties that is lastingly true; and even Orwell undoubtedly would have continued to deepen, enrich, modulate, and modify his opinions.

But he had come a long way, and, by coming as far as the great last essays, he left a precious heritage to the country that he loved in spite of itself. Though the appeal to a totalitarian model of a just society (and the corresponding contempt for piecemeal solutions) was to remain possible in the academy, it became much more difficult in everyday political journalism, simply because Orwell had discredited the idea in a plain style that nobody could forget and everybody felt obliged to echo. The theoretical work that disenfranchised all total transformations was done by others, such as Karl Popper, Raymond Aron, and Isaiah Berlin. Orwell never got around to figuring all that out in detail. But he felt it, and the language of his last essays is the language of feeling made as clear and bright as it can ever get.

How clear is that? Finally, it comes down to a question of language, which is only appropriate, because, finally, Orwell was a literary man. Politics inspired Orwell the way the arts had always inspired the great critics, which gives us the clue to where he got the plainly passionate style that we are so ready to call unique. It is unique, in its flexibility of speech rhythms and its irresistible force of assertion, but he didn't invent it; he invented its use. George Saintsbury had something of Orwell's schooled knack for speaking right out of the page, and Shaw had almost all of it: Orwell isn't often outright funny, but Shaw, in his six volumes of critical writings about music and theatre, deployed the full range of Orwell's debunking weapons with a generous humor to drive them home. Orwell called Shaw a windbag, but had obviously taken in every word the old man wrote. And there are many other critics who could be named, all the way up to the young F. R. Leavis, whom Orwell read with interest, if not without a certain distaste for his joyless zeal.

Orwell was a superb literary critic himself: he is the first person to read on Swift, on Dickens, and on Gissing, and if he had lived to finish his essay on Evelyn Waugh it would have been the best thing on the subject, the essay that really opens up Waugh's corrosively snobbish view of life without violating his creative achievement. Had Orwell lived to a full term, he might well have gone on to become the greatest modern literary critic in the language. But he lived more than long enough to make writing about politics a branch of the humanities, setting a standard of civilized response to the intractably complex texture of life. No previous political writer had brought so much of life's lesser detail into the frame, and other countries were unlucky not to have him as a model. Sartre, for example, would have been incapable of an essay about the contents of a junk shop, or about how to make the ideal cup of tea—the very reason he was incapable of talking real sense about politics.

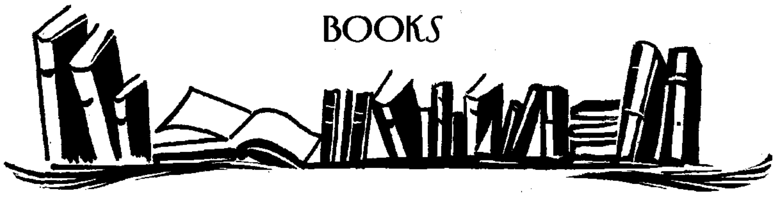
In one of the very last, and best, of his essays, "Lear, Tolstoy, and the Fool," Orwell paid his tribute to Shakespeare. He was too modest to say that he was paying a debt as well, but he was:

> Shakespeare was not a philosopher or a scientist, but he did have curiosity: he loved the surface of the earth and the process of life—which, it should be repeated, is *not* the same thing as wanting to have a good time and stay alive as long as possible. Of course, it is not because of the quality of his thought that Shakespeare has survived, and he might not even be remembered as a dramatist if he had not also been a poet. His main hold on us is through language.

A writer has to know a lot about the rhythms of natural speech before he can stretch them over the distance covered by those first two sentences. Each of them is perfectly balanced in itself, and the second is perfectly balanced against the first—the first turning back on itself with a strict qualification, and the second running away in relaxed enjoyment of its own fluency. They could stand on their own, but it turns out that both of them are there to pile their combined weight behind the third sentence—the short one—and propel it into your memory. It hits home with the force of an axiom.

And it isn't true—or, anyway, it isn't true enough. Elsewhere in the essay, Orwell shows signs of being aware that the relationship of Shakespeare's language to the quality of his thought can never be fully resolved in favor of either term. But not even Orwell could resist a resonant statement that fudged the facts—a clarity that is really an opacity. Yes, Orwell did write like an angel, and that's the very reason we have to watch him like a hawk. Luckily for us, he was pretty good at watching himself. He was blessed with a way of putting things that made anything he said seem so, but that was only a gift. His intellectual honesty was a virtue.

Orwell's standards of plain speaking always were and still are a mile too high for politicians. What finally counts with politicians is what they do, not how they say it. But for journalists how they say it counts for everything. Orwell's style shows us why a style is worth working at: not just because it gets us a byline and makes a splash but because it compresses and refines thought and feeling without ceasing to sound like speech—which is to say, without ceasing to sound human. At a time when ideological politics still exercised such an appeal that hundreds of purportedly civilized voices *had* ceased to sound human, Orwell's style stood out. The remarkable thing is that it still does. Ideologues are thin on the ground nowadays, while any substantial publication has a would-be George Orwell rippling the keys in every second cubicle, but the daddy of modern truthtellers still sounds fresh. So it wasn't just the amount of truth he told but the way he told it, in prose transmuted to poetry by the pressure of his dedication. This great edition, by revealing fully for the first time what that dedication was like, makes his easy-seeming written speech more impressive than ever, and even harder to emulate. To write like him, you need a life like his, but times have changed, and he changed them. ♦

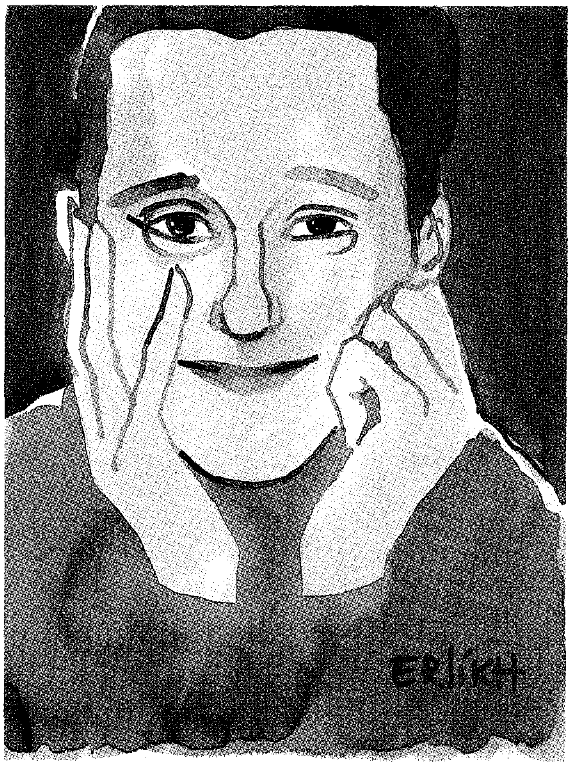


UNHOLY HAPPINESS

A young Scottish talent blazes forth with an unlikely romance.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

It's hard to imagine that the relationship between a battered Scottish housewife and a chatty media personality with an addiction to pornography would inspire a novel that is both erotic and funny, but then there is nothing predictable about A. L. Kennedy's "Original Bliss" (Knopf; $21). From its opening paragraph, the writer's quirky, tender voice makes you listen up: "Mrs. Brindle lay on her living-room floor, watching her ceiling billow and blink with the cold, cold colours and the shadows of British Broadcast light. A presumably educative conversation washed across her and she was much too tired to sleep or listen, but that was okay, that was really quite all right." Who, one wonders instantly, is this formally named Mrs. Brindle, and why is she watching television in so strange a fashion? Along with this sense of piqued curiosity comes a more subliminal awareness of an intimate literary style. With its mixture of an almost childlike immediacy ("cold, cold colours") and a distanced, wholly adult sense of irony ("a presumably educative conversation"), the book quietly sets about rearranging your usual perceptions of the world—and of the complicated meshing of fear and desire.



A. L. Kennedy contemplates the risks of intimacy.

EDUARD ERLIKH

Mrs. Brindle, as we will discover, does have a first name—Helen—but she has become so alien to herself that it seems easier, at least in the beginning, to see her as a closed-off being, isolated by propriety. She remains impersonally defined even when she is caught in a moment of physical yearning, as though the author were intent on honoring her character's rigidly maintained boundaries: "Mrs. Brindle's skin, even under the covers, felt impossibly naked—the touch of herself, alone with herself, the brush of her arm on her stomach, of her legs against her legs, tugged her awake." Mrs. Brindle is one of those naturally responsive people who have been educated at an early age in the art of self-denial, which includes the lesson, "hinted around in Biology," that women's orgasms are "a relatively pointless extravagance." Having lost the religious conviction that once sustained her in lieu of human warmth, she now distracts herself with homely comforts: "The harmless impacts of water on glass were among the small, domesticated sounds that Mrs. Brindle loved. Like the first whis-

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pers from a kettle when it clears its throat before a boil, they made her feel at home and peaceful." And then into her life comes Edward E. Gluck, the proponent of a pseudoscientific brand of self-help called the New Cybernetics, whom Mrs. Brindle encounters first on television and then on the radio. The second time she hears him speak, in a voice that is "jovially clandestine," she stops mixing a batch of Yorkshire pudding so that she can pay closer attention. Gluck appears to be on familiar terms with himself ("he put his inside on his outside with a kind of clinical delight"), to the same degree that his listener has withdrawn from her own shadow. She makes a rare excursion from her house to buy a collection of his cockamamie theories, and then, in one of those hopeful leaps that only desperate characters are capable of making, follows him to Stuttgart, where he is taking part in "a meeting of high-powered minds."

What transpires, after Gluck and Mrs. Brindle get together for coffee in the foyer of his Stuttgart hotel, is a slow coming together of two hungry souls: "They did not hurry, only ached towards each other, in the grip of babbling neurons and unruly electricity." It's a situation that might make for sitcom pathos—a sort of "Sex & the Stunted Girl"—in less dexterous hands than Kennedy's. But the author is more interested in the groping toward than in the groping itself; instead of just tossing her characters into bed and giving them some earthmoving moments, she has them circle, parry, and lay themselves emotionally bare to each other until the sexual tension practically steams off the page. Edward and Helen (at some point Mrs. Brindle allows the reader, along with Gluck, to approach her on a first-name basis) are like two heat-seeking missiles, afraid of burning each other up on contact. He instinctively recognizes that she is "bereaved"—in mourning for her life—rather than merely "depressed," while we come to see that her modest demeanor masks an appealing acerbity. (When Gluck tells her of his wish to smoke because of his affection for Zippo lighters, she retorts, "You never considered pyromania? Better for your health.") She understands that beneath his fame and suntan and "expensively distressed" clothes, Edward is lonely and wounded. But she is so wary that she has forgotten how to be anything else, and he is so ashamed of his compulsive immersion in hard-core porn that he initially pretends the problem belongs to people who are seeking his help. "We're looking at a group of men," Edward explains to Helen portentously after she happens upon a stash of X-rated photos in his hotel room, "who make themselves almost incapable of sustaining relationships with other human beings in the real world. . . . Deconditioning can help them to an extent, but they need something better than that. I hope to find that better something."

Needless to say, nothing comes easily to these two—sexual consummation least of all. One of Kennedy's achievements is to dramatize the risk involved in any genuine intimacy, and she does this in part by playing up the push-and-pull between these two people—damaged, but instructively neon-lit in their ability to feel. After Stuttgart, Helen returns to her static Glasgow life and her brute beast of a hubby, who gobbles up her elaborate pastries and puddings, jeers at her lapsed piety, and slaps her around. But Edward refuses to forget this surprisingly unshockable young woman, for whom he is prepared to give up his fondness for filth, sending her postcards and letters that detail his self-applied aversion therapy: "I look at my pictures having injected myself subcutaneously with 6mg of Apomorphine. The injection causes nausea unrelieved by vomiting, at least in theory. This means I should associate my sexual obsession with nausea, rather than orgasm." The question of will they or won't they haunts the premises with ever greater urgency, but Kennedy sets up detour after painful detour, as though she were testing her characters' mettle. Toward the end, the violence rains down, and the plot begins to feel strangely punitive: Mr. Brindle unleashes a murderous bout of fury against his wife (who is no longer Mrs. Brindle, no longer even Helen, but, rather, simply "you"—that is, us), and Edward's commitment to Helen takes the form of a literal rescue mission. She emerges from a state of near-death into his care—and, finally, into the carnal moment that even the most incongruous of lovers can be relied on to arrive at: "A stutter of hands and there he is, the lovely man. In."

"Original Bliss" is occasionally convoluted in its stages-of-the-cross progression toward the epiphany of coupledom. The shifts in mood and scene are sometimes jagged, and Mrs. Brindle's husband appears out of the mists midway through the book, almost too late to undo the impression that he is a phantasm. Some may find the descriptions of the male pornographic imagination, embodied by Edward, so vivid as to be unsettling. But they're persuasive. Kennedy has bravely fixed her mind on the allure of the debased, fetishized female object, and doesn't shrink from describing Edward's reveries as he contemplates a glossy shot of a woman with two men: "I want to know how she feels right up inside, when I'm up to my balls in her. . . ."

It's a high-wire act, yet Kennedy manages to keep the prurient from overtaking her story, which is essentially a romance. At the rim of this eccentrically conceived tale hovers the possibility that all our hearts are "amoral and unlikely." Indeed, "Original Bliss" might be said to belong to the freewheeling literary tradition that includes Capote's "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and Walker Percy's "The Moviegoer," and holds that most of us are misfits until proved otherwise. This is one of those books that make you curious to meet the author; you wonder how Kennedy came to dream up Helen and Edward and how, at the age of thirty-three, she understands so much about the existential unease that wafts, unremarked on, through ordinary life. Kennedy comes from Scotland, a country that is rich these days in fiction writers (Alasdair Gray, Irvine Welsh, Alice Thompson); she has published two collections of short stories and two novels, but this is the first of her books to have crossed the Atlantic. She reminds me a bit of Carson McCullers and also of Marjorie Kellogg, because of a certain wise-child quality in her writing, and because of the delight she takes in noticing oddities. But these are the sort of calibrated comparisons that a critic is supposed to make, when what is really worth observing about "Original Bliss" is that it is like no other book, and that its author deserves to be compared to no one but her own fiercely talented self. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE RESTRAINT OF BEASTS, by Magnus Mills (Arcade; $22.95). In this insidiously funny first novel, three laborers attempt to fence in a hillside in England while the world comes unhinged around them. The narrator, an English foreman, is assigned to oversee two hostile (and somewhat bestial) Scots: Tam, who has a garbled tattoo on his forearm, and Richie, who solemnly listens to head-banger music on a stretched tape. "The Restraint of Beasts," designed both to amuse and to alarm, resembles an electrified fence: once you've grabbed hold there's no letting go.

THE COLLECTOR OF HEARTS: NEW TALES OF THE GROTESQUE, by Joyce Carol Oates (Dutton; $24.95). These short, swift stories read like dreams you can't wake from, whether about a college girl whose mad mother appears from the asylum to ruin her life or about an innocent entranced by the beautiful voice of a singer. In one story, emissions from an artist's diseased body are used as the physical material for his paintings; many of the tales similarly suggest that scarring is the material of art. For the most part, these are horror stories only in that they dwell on the panic and corruption to be found in ordinary life.

TRUTH COMES IN BLOWS, by Ted Solotaroff (Norton; $23.95). Solotaroff, a literary critic and the founder of *New American Review*, grew up in New Jersey before and during the Second World War. His father, the owner of a plate-glass shop, seems to have dedicated himself to grinding down his son in every possible way while belittling his wife and pursuing assorted affairs. Eventually, a sympathetic high-school teacher, a hitch in the Navy, and the divorce of Solotaroff's parents broke the spell of his dispiriting childhood. The elements of this memoir may be familiar, but they are presented unflinchingly and with deep feeling.

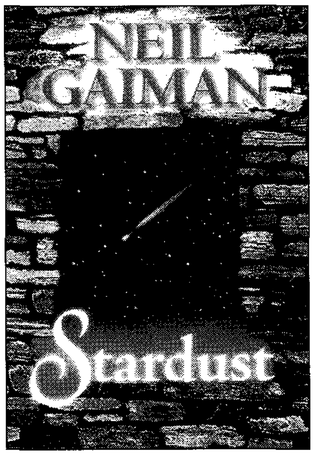
RUINING THE PICTURE, by Pimone Triplett (TriQuarterly; $14.95). These days, young poets seem to believe that we are what we wear, and so they don as many different styles as possible in their first books to demonstrate breadth of learning; "Ruining the Picture" is a welcome exception to that trend. Poised somehow between James Merrill and Alice Fulton, Triplett is a poet of complex surfaces and elegant ideas, and her poems are remarkable for their coherence.

BIRD'S EYE VIEWS, by John W. Reps (Princeton Architectural Press; $65). Before the advent of aerial photography, and before American and Canadian cities grew to titanic size, intrepid nineteenth-century lithographers created richly colored "bird's eye views" of towns and cities. Typically drawn from imaginary vantage points, these sumptuous panoramas were must-haves for the well-appointed Victorian parlor. Among them are Chicago, before and after the Great Fire; San Francisco, before the quake; and Oklahoma City, ten months old and already a sprawling grid on an otherwise empty plain.

(Advt.)

It is fair to say that we are offering readers the moon and the stars this month—in both a figurative and a literal sense.

In his previous novel, **Neil Gaiman** led us through abandoned subway tunnels running beneath the streets of London, and into a different existence altogether called *Neverwhere*. ***STARDUST*** is the bestselling author's latest excursion into uncharted territories. His story begins in the Victorian Era in the ancient English village called Wall—where a lovestruck youth sees a falling star and vows to retrieve it for his beloved—and then branches off in unexpected directions, even turning back upon itself in space and time. As is the case with most things imagined by the creator of the legendary Sandman graphic novel series, this distinctly grown-up fairy tale redefines the boundaries separating reality and dream. Gaiman draws from the deep wellsprings of myth and lore to create a haunting work of beauty, surprise, and intensity. Once again he takes us to astonishing places.



Tony Fletcher's ***MOON*** is subtitled "The Life and Death of a Rock Legend" specifically Keith Moon, the brilliant, rhythmically innovative wild man who played drums in the iconic British rock group, the Who. Music journalist Fletcher spent more than three years researching Moon's life and times, and has, as a result, penned the definitive biography of a singular artist who completely reinvented his instrument, inspired generations of musicians, and earned a well-deserved reputation as a full-throttle hedonist living at the center of an unending party. Nothing of Moon's is lost here—his genius, his charm, his wit, his careless outrageousness and total lack of guile. Arguably the greatest rock drummer in history, and the most excessive personality in an era of unparalleled pop excess, Keith Moon lived hard and died before he got old. His exploits have become the stuff of legend. In these pages is the unvarnished truth.

the life and death of a rock legend
MOON
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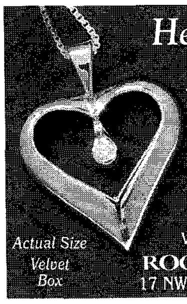

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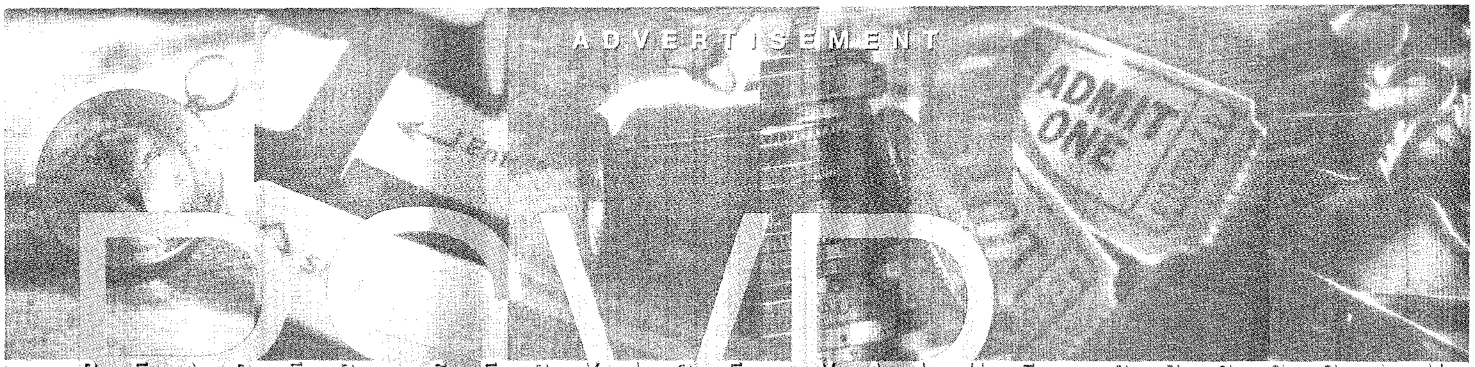

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ACROSS

1 SH(AMR)OCK (*arm* anag.)
7 OTTOM + AN (*motto* rev.)
8 IS THAT SO (anag.)
9 ZEUS (rev.)
11 G + HOST
13 STELE (anag.)
18 SWAN (hidden)
19 WALT + ZING
20 AS + P + HALT
21 THRE(AD)E-D

DOWN

1 S(E)IZES
2 HOSES (anag.)
3 ATTUNES (anag.)
4 ROACH (anag.)
5 C + ASKS
6 KNOW (*no* hom.)
10 HOG-WILD (anag.)
12 TIN GOD (hidden)
14 T + RASH
15 (s)LITHE(r)
16 DANTE (anag.)
17 SWAT (2 defs.)

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THE ART WORLD

SPRINGTIME FOR KIEFER

A mini-retrospective of Germany's master of apocalypse.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

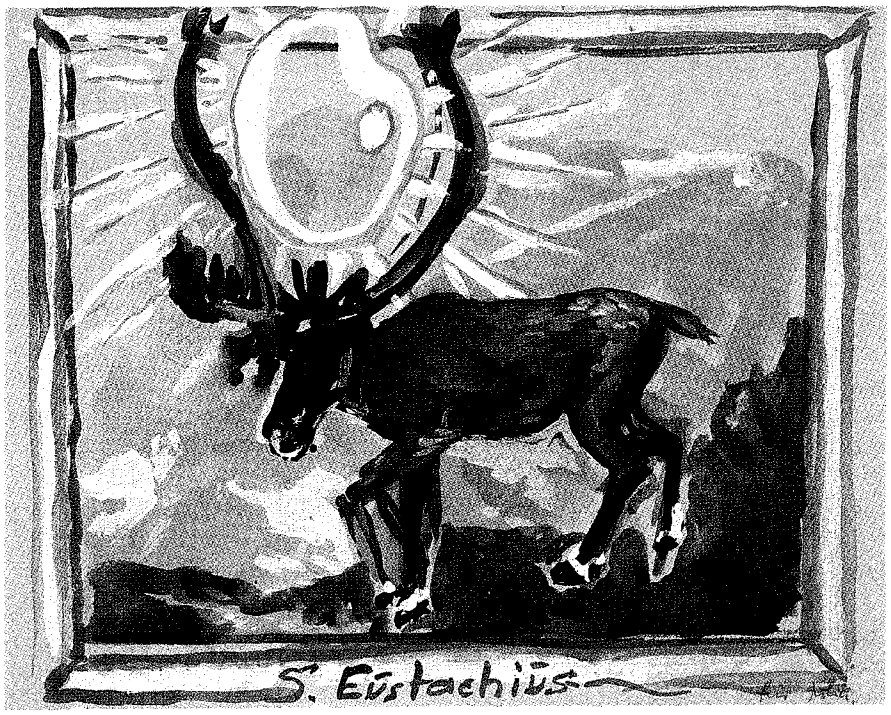
WALL texts are a bane of late-twentieth-century museology, turning art shows into walk-in brochures. We can't help but read them—I defy anyone to ignore writing on walls—and thus are jerked from silent reverie into nattering pedagogy. Art and education are terrible bedfellows. They don't even like each other. Their congress makes for bad sex in the head. The unwary viewer of a label-larded exhibition, neither quite looking nor quite thinking, incurs the grimmest of mental states: edification.

This is the rule. For an exception to it, visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art's mini-retrospective of fifty-four works on paper by Anselm Kiefer. Watch fellow-viewers as they alternately devour fat paragraphs by the curator Nan Rosenthal and ogle lean pictures by the fifty-three-year-old German artist. A murmur of hectic discussions is heard. Such night-schoolish avidity is normal at a Kiefer show. Looking at his art, even without explanatory matter on hand, can be like having a weird Great Books seminar fall on your head—and loving it. He makes us pant for exegesis, which the Met provides in savory chunks.

Some bad sex is more exciting than most good sex. Some subjects and modes of knowledge raise the heartbeat and drench the brain with hormonal cocktails. Best known for huge, encrusted paintings that not only depict but practically are wastelands and mighty ruins, Kiefer is a great artist, somehow generically—as if greatness were a job description. (He is great in the way that an interior decorator is interior.) He is also perversely manipulative. His art fuses raw physicality and excruciating cerebration. He is a master of austerely sensuous visual rhetoric—notably, effects of cathedralesque light in gloom which render us, at a glance, hushed and receptive. What ensues really is like a tutorial—or bull session—in history, philosophy, religion, and so on, amid the wackily arrayed stacks of an imaginary library.

Most of the Met's Kiefers—drawings, oils, watercolors, acrylics, collages, altered photographs, and colossal, quilted woodcuts, all replete with allusive subject matter—date from the nineteen-seventies and early eighties, when he famously flaunted themes of, about, or associated with the Third Reich. His swashbuckling presumption affected many German critics like a fart in a crowded theatre. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or "coming to terms with the past," had long been a shibboleth of German intellectual life, but it came with protocols. One of them was never, ever, to fool around with tainted symbols—which, apropos the reeking national heritage, could sometimes appear to include everything this side of Linzer tortes.

Kiefer started with a bang during his student days, in the nineteen-sixties, when he had himself photographed performing the Nazi salute in assorted European locales. (He favored the salute's swanky variant: arm angled to the side, hand parallel with the ground—a living hieroglyph, racy and mysterious, in the chillingly elegant way of so much Nazi design.) That series of works, which is documented but not shown at the Met, is hilarious in a "Springtime for Hitler" vein—"Talk about bad taste!"—but plenty disturbing, too, because it's so defiantly deadpan. Kiefer never explains a joke, including the kind that makes people want to throw up.



Kiefer's "St. Eustace" (8¼" x 10¾"): The artist's palette has replaced Dürer's crucifix.

ANSELM KIEFER, "S. EUSTACHIUS" (1974)/COURTESY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Like a horror-movie heroine who, against the audience's whimpered protests, homes in on the dark at the top of the stairs, the artist invited monstrous signifiers to pounce. One after another, the beasts turned out to be the moral equivalent of stuffed animals, perhaps grotesque enough but often touchingly naïve. Take the lyric "*Deutschland über alles.*" It was penned as a poem in 1841 by a most attractive Romantic and liberal poet named Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who would have been horrified by the later, shudder-making associations of his sentiments. Kiefer created a lot of works about von Fallersleben.

Kiefer enjoys juxtaposing mild causes and apocalyptic effects. At the Met, grandiose images and words of German magi whom the Nazis approved—Dürer, Goethe, Wagner, Stefan George, Martin Heidegger—amount to something like read-my-lips sound bites. Yet again Brünnhilde jumps her wonder horse, Grane, onto Siegfried's flaming pyre, initiating the only too prophetic, kaboom windup of "Götterdämmerung." There truly is a Mel Brooksian quality to the unwitting hellbentness of it all; but with an anguishing edge, because Kiefer never hygienically distances us from the pathos of any of his subjects.

You know you have crossed a line from irony to desperate mourning when you encounter works inspired by Paul Celan's devastating Holocaust poem "Todesfuge" ("Death Fugue"). You just are not sure where the line was. Loyal to strictly aesthetic criteria, Kiefer never contradicts an effect of beauty or piquancy, no matter what its source. Would it make you feel good to believe that Hitler's pet artiste, Albert Speer, was a lousy architect? Too bad. As Kiefer's visual quotations of Speer designs make plain, the little prick was quite terrific.

In a way, Nazism was an aesthetic sickness. (Communism was an ethical one.) It cannot be understood without a sense of its poetic tug. Most people have no trouble grasping the awful attraction, though they may be ashamed to admit it. Thus the practically universal exhilaration of Kiefer's audiences outside Germany—prominently in Israel, where he was popular even before he took up themes from the Torah and the Cabala in the mid-eighties. He did two tremendously refreshing things in his Third Reich-related works. He refused to cringe, defensively, about events in which he had had no part; and he teased out every last tendril that he found in himself of cultural and emotional connection to those events.

The Kieferian catharsis—an edification laced with adrenaline—is very messy, because it cannot be disentangled from the artist's narcissism. As eagerly as we join him on his spiritual adventures, we are always only passengers. Though at first his œuvre seems self-evidently an epic, it is essentially an immense, baggy diary. It is a running chronicle—in paintings big and small, sculpture, and Brobdingnagian books, as well as works on paper—of hobbyhorses. Kiefer makes no bones about this. It is central to his humor. While evoking thundering sublimities, he is like a kid playing alone in his room on a rainy day. Consider "Bilderstreit" ("Iconoclastic Controversy"), an altered photograph that explores ancient religious debates on the permissibility of images: toy tanks assault a clay palette.

Oh, that palette form. It pops up repeatedly as a symbol of Kiefer's artistic vocation. It's pretty funny when you reflect that he is more apt to wield a shovel than to use such dainty old studio gear. (In a former studio that I visited, he suspended paintings from overhead cranes and moved about the vast space on a bicycle.) Plainly, he is aware of the palette's cornball quotient—as in the cartoonish 1974 "St. Eustace," where it appears between a reindeer's antlers. (The original miracle, which was the subject of an engraving by Dürer, involved a crucifix.) But, ultimately, Kiefer isn't joking.

He brazens the palette as a cop flashes a badge to penetrate a crime scene. It embodies his authority. It demands unquestioning respect. Its emotional basis is virulently sentimental, as Kiefer knows. Simply, the palette has been his best expedient—short of psychological self-exposure—for acknowledging and justifying his art's roiling audacity. Actually, he tried some self-exposure in a notorious show at the Marian Goodman Gallery a few years ago—revealing, with stacks of stained books, that for the last two decades his sex life had consisted largely of (bibliophilic!) masturbation. A traumatized public silence proved that the art world's reputation for being unshockable had been overstated.

Take it or leave it. That's our choice in the face of Kiefer's intoxicating—and perhaps somewhat toxic—genius. Are we willing to grant an individual the shamanistic power to feel and think in our stead about matters that concern everybody? Rationally, I would say no. But at any Kiefer show, awash in material delights and transcendent brainstorms, I am not rational. It is easy to understand how he spooks conscientious Germans—reawakening Führer effects. But for those of us with no acculturated proclivities to, say, invade Poland those effects may be profoundly educational. Go. See. Read all about it. ◆

SHOWCASE BY GILLES PERESS

OUR MAN PHILIP

The library at *The New Yorker* is lined with cumbersome black scrapbooks. If you are a writer or an artist, and have produced enough, you get your own, with your name hand-printed on it, in white marker. The opening pages of Philip Hamburger's scrapbook are brown and dirty with age and have come loose from the binding. A rubber-stamp date, October 26, 1940, appears above the first pasted-in piece. Its title is "La Patrie," and its subject is the tyranny exercised by a pair of Parisian chairs over a formerly ordinary American household: "Painfully fragile and straight-backed, with a tapestry effect on their seats, they stood lonely and forlorn, sacred islands of France amidst a sea of Grand Rapids." The second piece is about the arrival at the Bronx Zoo of fifty-four new immigrants, including an aardwolf, a steinbok, and two Livingston touracos. The third is about a Norwegian pilot who relishes bombing the Germans. Taken together, these beginnings predict the qualities that have attended Hamburger's writing for sixty years: humor, curiosity, eclecticism, a general merriment in the world, and, at the same time, an overarching moral purposefulness.

Knopf has just issued a selection of writings culled from this unwieldy scrapbook entitled "Friends Talking in the Night." A more manageable omnium-gatherum, it contains, among other things, Profiles of Oscar Hammerstein and J. P. Marquand; an assessment of the work of Thomas Eakins; a remembrance of the first inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt, in 1933; and surreal, chilling postwar accounts of visits to Berchtesgaden and to Perónist Argentina, where Hitler was then widely rumored to be in hiding. Also included are several of Hamburger's portraits of American towns. "Many times, I didn't know why I went where I went," he once wrote of them. "I found each place more foreign than the last, and no two places the same—never the same realities or the same dreams or the same yesterdays or the same todays. How could it be otherwise?" —MARY HAWTHORNE

MAGNUM

EE

THE THEATRE

WIT AND WISDOM

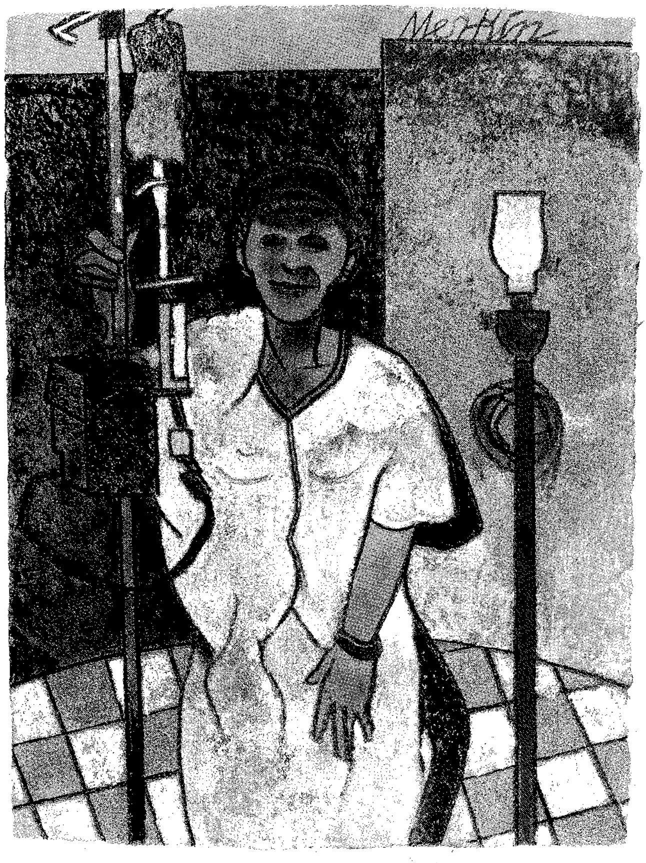
High humor and Holy Sonnets in the hospital.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

MARGARET EDSON'S "Wit," having concluded a three-month run at the MCC Theatre, has recently reopened, at the larger Union Square Theatre; far and away the most celebrated new play of 1998, "Wit" stands a good chance of maintaining that status well into the new year. I confess to approaching it with wariness. There was that daunting, daring title, for one thing: right up front, the play seemed to declare itself an occasion that the audience had better be prepared to rise to. *En garde!* And there was the fact that the play concerned the life and death of a John Donne scholar: it would probably be too *studied*—one would be counting the ways in which it missed, or too easily hit, its marks. Perhaps there would even be homework.

The actual experience of seeing "Wit," however, is thrilling, and part of the thrill is that the play *is* an experience; the evening has a sublime indivisibility and power that no account of particulars can, finally, get at. It's not that the play is, or sets out to be, "perfect" or seamless; on the contrary, it is written with deliberate self-consciousness, every line "matters" in a way that you can't fail to notice, and the play frequently calls your attention to its devices. That's its success, and that's its poignance: its devices mirror the human devices we see at work in the main character, in a way that highlights the essential tragedy and comedy of being human—devices are all we have, and they're not enough.

The play begins abruptly and unceremoniously, in a stark hospital setting, with the shoving aside of a white curtain by Dr. Vivian Bearing, a professor at an unspecified university, who is wearing a hospital gown and a baseball cap, and is pushing an I.V. pole as she walks toward the audience. As Dr. Bearing, Kathleen Chalfant gives an excruciating, powerful performance. It's a role that requires her to pull off two very different tours de force: one that's close to being over the top (Bearing is one of those larger-than-life professors who are terrifyingly smart, and proud of it), and one that involves flying in the dark (how does a person die? how does *this* person die?). Chalfant brings spine and severity to the role, as she did to the stern Mormon matriarch in "Angels in America," six years ago, and also a brave nakedness. Her piercing eyes have the wrath of God in them, but her broad face and pale skin make her vulnerable—and Bearing has lost all her hair from chemotherapy treatments, which heightens the aura of mortality, the sense that you're seeing the skull beneath the skin.



Kathleen Chalfant as a fierce and touching Donne scholar.

RICHARD MERKIN

The first few minutes of the play are giddily, awfully, hilarious. (They are, in fact, the essence of wit.) Bearing delivers a devastating disquisition on the true meaning—and ultimate pointlessness, in her case—of the standard question directed at hospital patients: "How are you feeling today?" "There is some debate as to the correct response to this salutation," she says dryly:

> Should one reply, "I feel good," using *feel* as a copulative to link the subject, *I*, to its subjective complement, *good;* or "I feel well," modifying with an adverb the subject's state of being?
>
> I don't know. I am a professor of seventeenth-century poetry, specializing in the Holy Sonnets of John Donne.
>
> So I just say, "Fine."

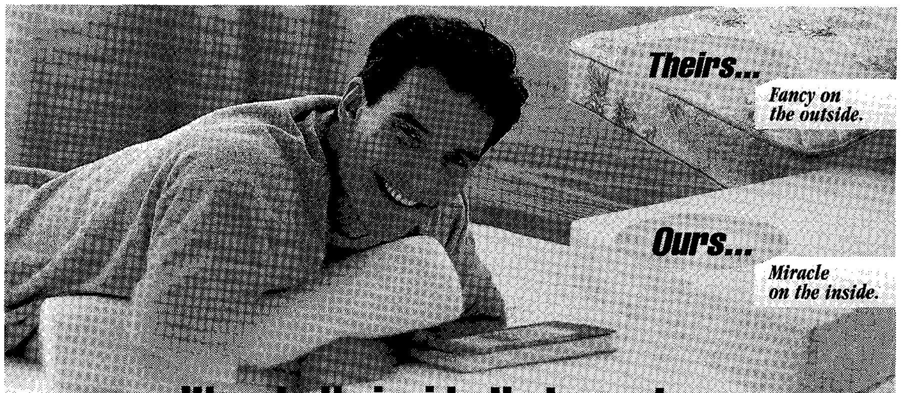
Bearing is playing games with words, but word games will not save her, as she herself knows: "I would prefer that a play about me be cast in the mythic-heroic-pastoral mode; but the facts, most notably stage-four metastatic ovarian cancer, conspire against that. 'The Faerie Queene' this is not." Such is the effectiveness of Bearing's crisp eloquence that you almost believe she could trump the facts; but, as she says—almost as an aside, and with exquisitely calibrated self-dramatizing restraint—"There is no stage five."

In an early scene, we see Bearing learning the news of her illness from her doctor, a cancer researcher named Kelekian, who is played by Walter Charles. "Wit" alternates between the present and the past, and in a later scene Charles doubles as Bearing's father. The parallels are eerie: Bearing at fifty sits next to the doctor's desk, being instructed in the fine points of her illness; as he talks, she focusses on certain words—"insidious," "antineoplastic." Bearing at five sits on the floor next to her father's easy chair and reads from a

Beatrix Potter book; she fixes on the word "soporific" and asks her father what it means, and his answer opens up a whole new world to her: the enchanted forest of words. It's very easy to judge Dr. Bearing's behavior toward her students (the actors playing her students also play hospital workers—it's their turn to push *her* around) and to assess the justness of her isolation (no friends visit her in the hospital, and there's no indication that she has ever had, or cared to have, a love life), but your thinking about her becomes more complicated once you see how the very idea of knowledge makes her five-year-old face come alive.

If "Wit" errs on the side of neatness, it is only in one respect, and that is the open-and-shut irony of Bearing's having a doctor who is too much like her, who is much more interested in research than he is in people: Dr. Posner (Alec Phoenix), a young research fellow under Dr. Kelekian, actually has to remind himself to ask his patient how she is feeling. Dr. Posner, who regards Bearing more or less as packaging—it's her cells he cares about—makes her realize for the first time how blithely she humiliated her students. And what do you know—he was once one of them. Other roles in "Wit" contain some of the same pitfalls of coincidence, but the performers manage to skirt them. Helen Stenborg, who plays Bearing's rigorous, unforgiving academic mentor, and Paula Pizzi, as an oncology nurse who embodies the milk—*condensed* milk—of human kindness, maneuver their characters beautifully.

Right up to the last second, "Wit" has riches of acting, writing, and stagecraft that you revel in, even in the atmosphere of death, and it is directed with just the right touch by Derek Anson Jones. Its use of Donne's Holy Sonnet X—"Death, Be Not Proud"—even pulls the poem out of the overheated, drowsy classroom of your past and into your active consciousness. (Imagine a play that made you feel newly fascinated by the Pledge of Allegiance.) Remarkably, "Wit" is Edson's first play; she wrote it seven years ago, when she was thirty. Watching it isn't easy—it isn't easy to watch human beings be tested, knowing they can only fail—and yet you feel that its lessons and pleasures amount to a second chance, to an amazing grace. ◆



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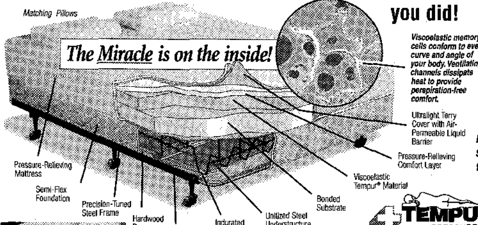

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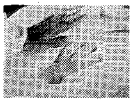

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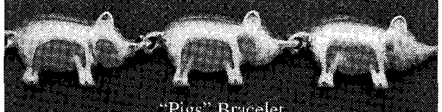

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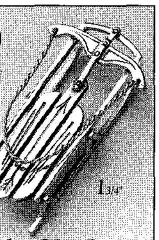

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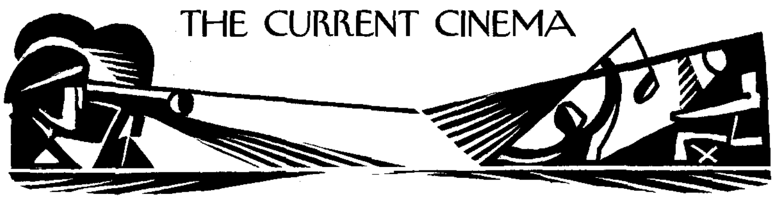


DYING FALLS

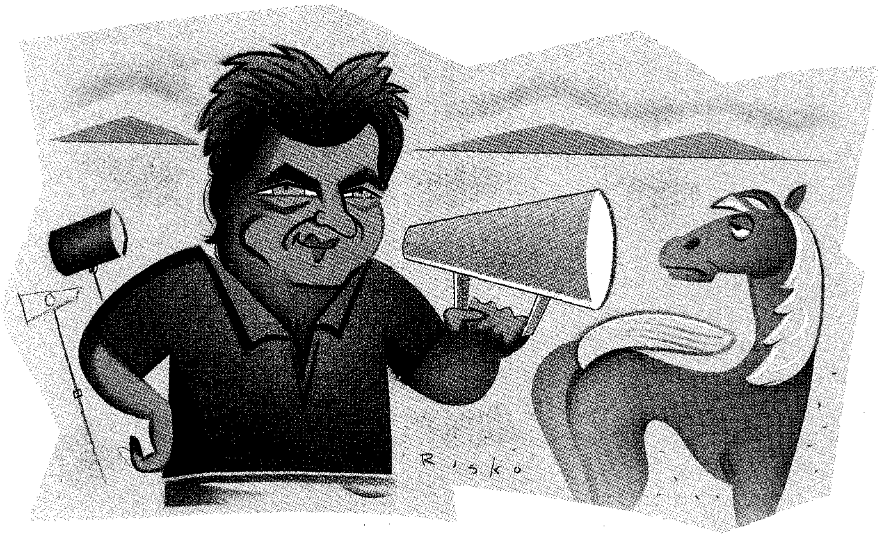
Rivalry out West, and a musical love life.

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE new Stephen Frears movie, "The Hi-Lo Country," is set in New Mexico, not far from Colorado. Hi-Lo itself is a fictional prairie town, but the landscape in which it unfolds, with Cimarron to the west and the Oklahoma state line maybe fifty miles to the east, has bred so many fictions in its time that the place feels weathered with familiarity. More important, the title seems to reach past geography toward the twin heroes of the story; the Hi would be Pete (Billy Crudup), a sensitive lad with suitable cheekbones, while his best friend, Big Boy (Woody Harrelson), is most definitely one of the Lo, and proud of it.

Both men are cowboys, or so they believe; the film is about the resilience of that belief—about how long it can be expected to stay in the saddle. The action begins around the time of Pearl Harbor, an outrage to which Big Boy responds with gusto: "I'm going to be a marine!" he yells, and he immediately embarks on one of his rough, bundle-of-fun scraps with the adoring Pete. There's something slightly forced in these early encounters: Frears has to establish the bond of trust between the two men, but his solution is to have them wrestle like kids or puppies. Even when we cut to the end of the war, the innocence stays intact: home at last, Big Boy gallops out of the far horizon with his face hidden, like a crossbreed of Omar Sharif and the Lone Ranger, then hurls himself onto Pete and starts scrapping with him all over again. Will these guys never grow up?

There is plenty here to ripen them; with all the love and death floating around, the two of them should age like whiskey. Yet their attitude toward women still bears the taste of adolescence. Pete has a crush on Mona (Patricia Arquette), but Big Boy gets there first, unfazed by the fact that Mona is married to a local man. By way of compensation, Pete nourishes a placid affection for Josepha (Penelope Cruz), who must vaguely wonder what's wrong with him. Anybody who has seen Cruz in some of her Spanish movies, like "Belle Époque" and "Jamón Jamón," will be alert to her lusciousness; so why does she get the cold-fish role here, and how did Frears manage to make her look so graceless? Instead, it is Arquette who gets to be the hot potato: when Pete inquires politely whether she rides, Mona says, "I love to ride. Riding is on the long list of things that I like to do." Yee-haw!



Stephen Frears turns an affectionate, British eye on the semi-desolation of postwar cowboy life in "The Hi-Lo Country."

"The Hi-Lo Country" is not really a cowboy movie, any more than "Rio Bravo" was. Like all Westerns these days, it feels smoked through with unavoidable regret. East of Nevada, it seems, elegy comes with the territory. Using funds from their military discharge, Pete and Big Boy buy cattle to raise on their land, but they come up hard against Jim Ed (Sam Elliott), a rangy type who stayed behind during the war, building up large herds of stock, which he now transports by truck. "People still drive cattle to the railheads," Pete says to him in defiance. Jim Ed gives him a wide, winner's smile. "Only in the movies," he replies.

It was brave of Frears to trespass upon terrain that Peter Bogdanovich had made his own in "The Last Picture Show"—to turn an affectionate eye upon semi-desolation, and upon the scrawny, minor-league tragedies that it invariably breeds. I am a fan of Frears's work: not since Alexander Mackendrick, who gave us "The Sweet Smell of Success," has a British director arrived in America, with its welter of new stars and locations, and held his nerve so well. In "The Grifters" and "Dangerous Liaisons" he showed not so much a willingness to take a stab at genre pictures as a clever hunch that, as an outsider, he might be best placed to delve into them and unearth the obsessions that had always lured him on. I would love to report that Frears has hit gold again with "The Hi-Lo Country," but the Western is the most stubborn genre of all. Its masters—Ford, Hawks, and Anthony Mann—were all born in America, and interlopers have rarely been made welcome. (Even the imperturbable Fritz Lang was rattled, allowing "Rancho Notorious" to decay into camp.) Frears, to his credit, does not seem lost here, yet his movie is jerky with impatience. His camera is forbidden to settle and gaze; the scrutinizing briskness that served him so well in

"Dangerous Liaisons," and prevented it from lapsing into beribboned grandeur, now leaves him embarrassed by the loping lyricism of an unpeopled land. His talent is for intensity, not spaciousness: the only moment in the movie that gets your pulse going is a Biblical blizzard, when Big Boy and Pete are trapped by snow and barbed wire, and the backdrop of New Mexico is wiped out.

"The Hi-Lo Country" was originally a novel by Max Evans. The book was first optioned in the early sixties by Sam Peckinpah, who tried for over twenty years to make it into a film; he was certainly the man for the job. The screenwriter whom Frears eventually hired is Walon Green, who wrote Peckinpah's "The Wild Bunch." (He also co-wrote "RoboCop 2," so don't get too excited.) There are fine lines in the script, just as there are gorgeously bronzed images of dust and sunset; but the movie, like most creative acts that hang on bravely at the butt end of a tradition, feels too conscious of that finesse for its own good. The ability of someone like Peckinpah or Mann to put his characters through the recklessness of violence and then relax them into their surroundings is now, I suspect, a dying art. Instead, we get the naked device of voice-over: "The pure simple joy of a cattle drive—all that sky—makes a man feel, *yes*, this is what I was born to do," Pete declares. It made this man feel, *no*, this is not what I came to hear. When any movie tells you what to feel, it's bad enough; when a cowboy gets on his high horse—well, then, I fear, it's time to ride away.

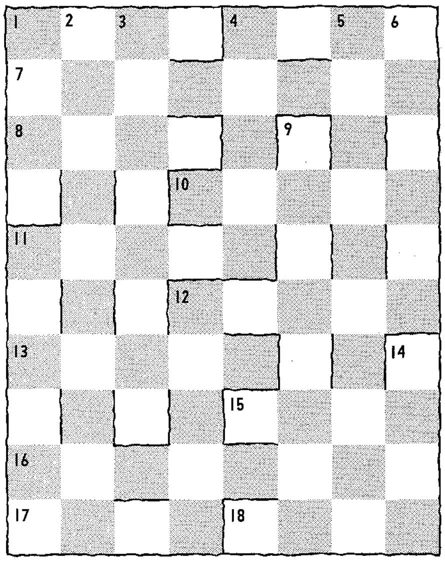
IT was only a matter of time before someone got round to filming the story of the cellist Jacqueline du Pré. Movies have always fallen for musical genius, presenting it in the guise of a colorful hysteria. Du Pré is ready-made for such treatment, since, by all accounts, her swooping emotional range covered all the octaves; what is more, she was cut down by an intolerably early death—a fate that no film can resist. Anand Tucker's "Hilary and Jackie," though, has one more ace up its sleeve. The script, by Frank Cottrell Boyce, is based in part on the memoirs of Jackie's sister, Hilary, herself an accomplished flautist, and of their brother, Piers. When these were published last year, attention was directed toward the episodes in which Jackie stole, or borrowed, Hilary's husband, Christopher (Kiffer) Finzi, and slept with him under the same roof. The combination of a much-loved English rose and thorny sexual shenanigans appealed to almost everything in the English character.

The mating game, in fact, takes up too much of the action; Emily Watson, who plays Jackie, spends an inordinate amount of time arriving or departing in states of bliss and frustration. At one point, she is found crouching naked in the English countryside—an authentic episode, to judge from Hilary's book, but a dangerous choice for the movie, which never quite tells us whether du Pré was mentally unhinged or just erotically ravenous, and which keeps losing its footing on the slide into melodrama. The music itself should be a check on this descent, but some of the corniest moments are inspired by Jackie's instrument. Her teacher (Bill Paterson) presents it to her with the words "It will give you the world, but you must give it yourself," a line no actor should be forced to say; later, she whispers "Thank you" to it when her fingering prowess has helped her into bed with Daniel Barenboim (James Frain). I half expected the cello to answer back in a low, autumnal moan.

Given Jackie's reputation as a force of nature, and given the celebrated image of a young woman thrashing her hair around in mid-Elgar as if she were head-banging her way through a Pearl Jam concert, it is hardly surprising that "Hilary and Jackie" should overheat. What cools the film down is the careful heed that it pays to those who stood in the blast area around du Pré. Rachel Griffiths, especially, turns the adult Hilary into a study in tolerant love; when she soothes the dying Jackie, who is shuddering in the last stages of multiple sclerosis, she seems to be staunching the indulgences of Watson's performance. Then, there is one of my favorite actresses, Celia Imrie, as Jackie's mother; I treasure the sight of her sitting on a park bench with the young Hilary, unscrewing a flask of coffee while they wait for the prodigy to finish her music class. Such is the awkward pride that stiffens ordinary mortals when confronted with unearthly gifts. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

No. 73 by Bruce McKenzie, Theresa Cunningham, and David McKeegan



ACROSS

1 Stop New York team's comeback (4)
4 Essential grape juice (4)
7 Once, moms cooked soup (8)
8 Support first-rate opera (4)
10 Candy coins (5)
11 Sound of cash register (5)
12 Kung-fu master gets into fight extremely fast (5)
13 Combat zones (not including northern regions) (5)
15 Returned brooches and clip (4)
16 Fancy prison song (8)
17 Key passage read aloud (4)
18 Starts to leer, eying Grable's shapely gams (4)

DOWN

1 Examine source of suspicious fire (4)
2 Improperly test oilier items for cosmetic purposes (10)
3 Risk final outrage (8)
4 Married love life in French film (5)
5 A little school making a difference (10)
6 Make fun of Tuesday's service (3,3)
9 Feelers Anne put out after wager (8)
11 Shellfish involved in girls' camp illness (6)
12 Piece of cake included in price of ticket for comedy show (5)
14 Chooses foreign post (4)

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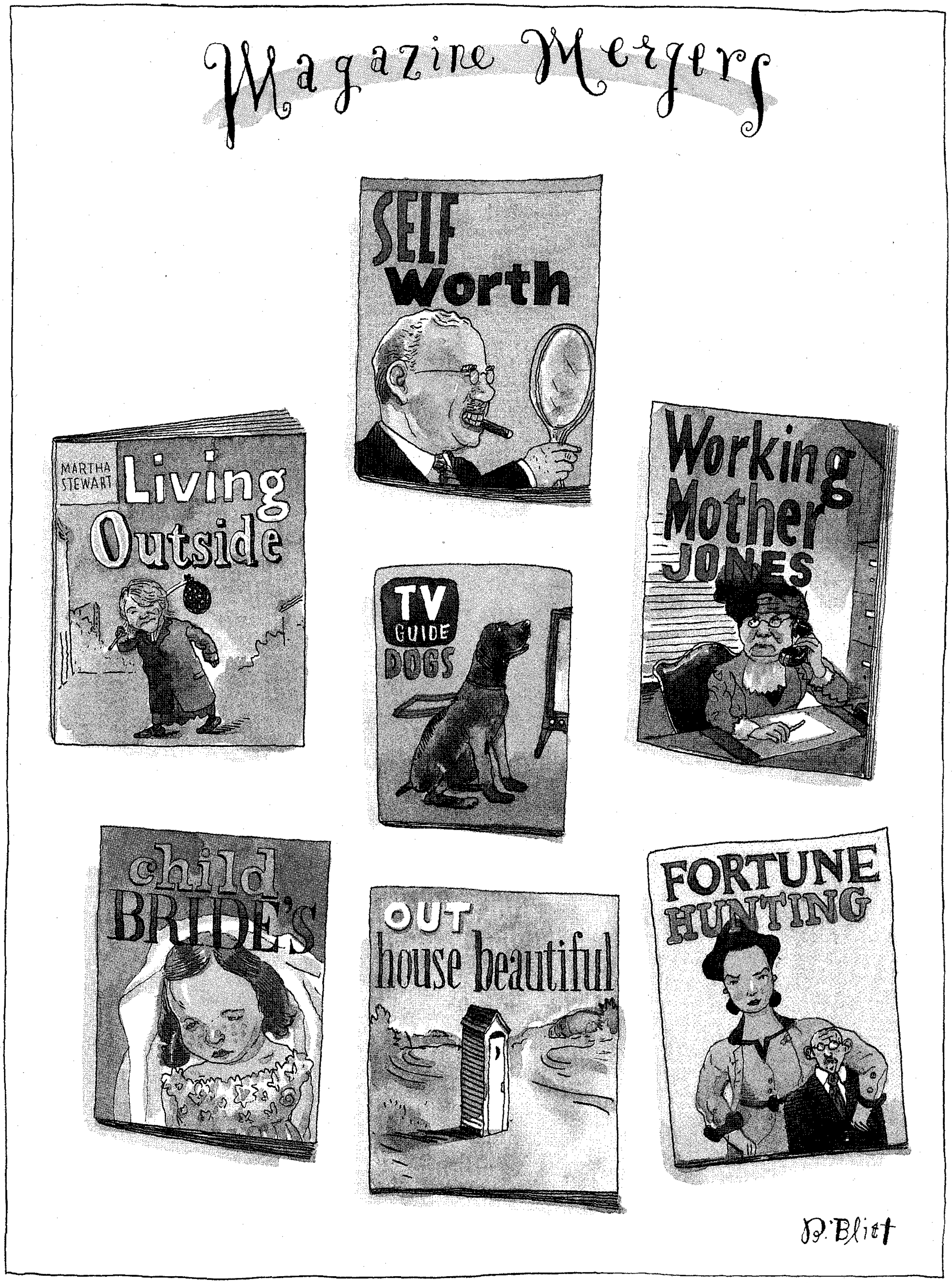
The solution to puzzle No. 72 appears on page 82. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

THE BACK PAGE

BY BARRY BLITT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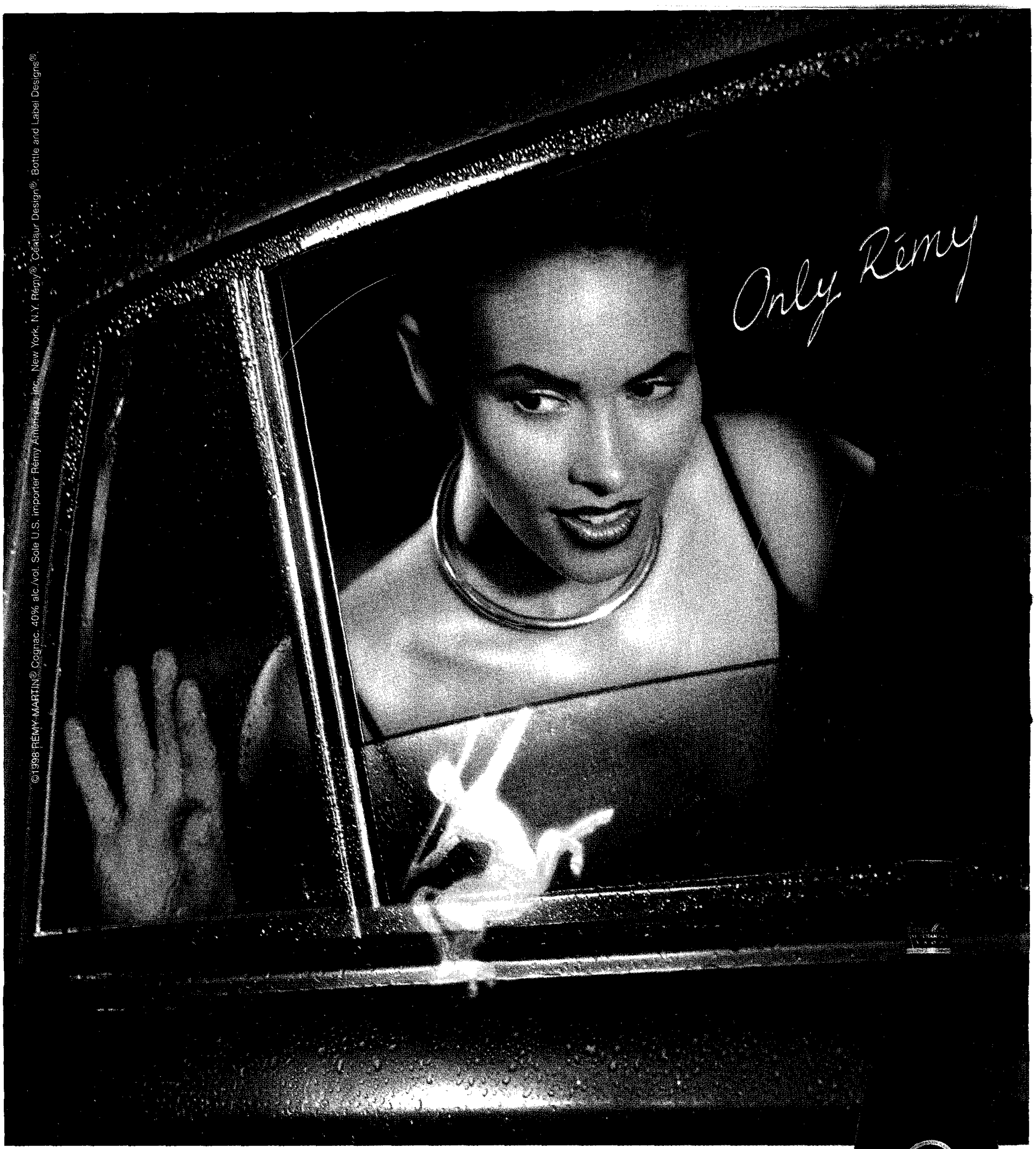

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